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Early Christianity: The Experience of the Divine

Course Guidebook

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Professor Johnson taught at Yale Divinity School from 1976 to 1982 and at Indiana University from 1982 to 1992 before accepting his current position at Emory. He is the author of twenty books, including *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (2nd edition, 1998), which is used widely as a textbook in seminaries and colleges. He has also published several hundred articles and reviews. He is currently at work on several books, including one on the Christian creed, one on the future of Catholic biblical scholarship, and one on the influence of Greco-Roman religion on Christianity.

Professor Johnson has taught undergraduates as well as master's level and doctoral students. At Indiana University, he received the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching, was elected a member of the Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching, and won the Brown Derby and Student Choice Awards for teaching. At Emory, he has twice received the "On Eagle's Wings Excellence in Teaching" Award. In 1997–1998, he was a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar, speaking at college campuses across the country.

Professor Johnson is married to Joy Randazzo. They share seven children, eleven grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and a Yorkshire terrier named Bailey.

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Early Christianity: The Experience of the Divine

Scope:

Christianity is the largest of the world religions and, despite being declared dead any number of times by its cultured despisers, continues to thrive and grow. What accounts for its continuing attractiveness and astonishing success in a "post-Christian" world? The answer is not to be found in Christianity's myths, or ideas, or moral teachings, but in its distinctive claim to mediate an experience of the divine power. In short, Christianity draws people because it is convincing as a religion.

Remarkably, present-day Christianity is seldom studied in terms of religion. For that matter, neither is Christianity's origin or history appreciated in religious terms. As a result, much of what makes Christianity appealing to many—as well as much of what repels others—is simply not seen, much less understood.

This course views early Christianity as it appears in the New Testament and other early literature in terms of religious experience. Its thesis is that religious experience accounts for its appearance in history and that experience was expressed and mediated by Christianity's various activities.

The approach differs sharply from the usual ways of looking at early Christianity, in terms of attack or apology. Attackers seek to collapse Christianity into its cultural context. Apologists argue for an utterly unique Christianity untouched in its ideas and morals and structures by either Judaism or Greco-Roman religion. Our approach emphasizes the connections among these culturally intertwined religions, finding the distinctive character of Christianity in the kind of experience of the divine that it enabled and the paradoxical figure through whom it was made available.

To see these issues fresh, we need a new way of looking, other than those offered by history and theology. The course attempts a phenomenological analysis of early Christianity. It uses history and social sciences, as well as comparative literary analysis, to look steadily and seriously at religious experience and behavior. The course's basic premise is that a connection exists between the two, and that by tracing patterns of behavior, we can detect the experience that organized them.

The first section of the course is focused on religious experience as the heart of any religion and above all as the heart of Christianity. The struggle to define religion and to locate the place of religious experience leads to a consideration of the kinds of religious experiences found in 1st-century Judaism and in Greco-Roman religion. In this section, we make use wherever possible of first-person accounts of visions, healings, and prayers to get a sense of the character of the religious tradition as revealed by its participants. This part of the course culminates in a consideration of the religious experience of Jesus—insofar as it can be determined—and the experience of the Resurrection that gave birth to the Christian religion.

The second section of the course focuses on the manifestations of religious experience in earliest Christianity and how they took on new form as Christianity developed over the next three centuries. For the first generation, we look at a series of practices: baptism, speaking in tongues, fellowship meals, healing, visions, and prayer. Each of these, when placed in the context of ancient religious practices and analyzed in light of even wider cross-cultural patterns, shows the deep convictions concerning the Resurrection of Jesus that are distinctive to Christianity. The course then turns to another set of topics: the holy community, worship, scripture, teachers and creeds, and the saints. In each case, the path is traced from the first generation through the 3rd and even 4th centuries to show how the power of experience does not disappear from this tradition but rather takes on new shape. Once more, our approach is distinctive in viewing internal Christian development not as a form of corruption and decline but as a legitimate transformation.

By its resolute concentration on religious experience, this course throws new light on ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, as well as on Christianity. In part, the course makes an argument about the nature of Western religion, then and now. Most of all, it argues that Christianity then or now cannot be understood unless its distinctive claims to the experience of the divine are appreciated. As its final lecture suggests, so-called "popular Christianity"—the one scorned equally by sophisticated believers and cultured critics—may well be "real Christianity."

Lecture One
Christianity as a Religion

Scope: Among world religions, Christianity is at once the best and least known. Christianity's political and cultural importance in the shaping of Western civilization and in the colonizing of non-Western parts of the world is obvious. Its institutional arrangements, theological disputes, and moral teachings are familiar. Less clear is the reason that the Christian religion—despised by so many and declared dead so many times—continues to thrive, drawing adherents from every nation. The study of Christianity precisely *as* a religion offers some clues, especially when the study focuses on the period of Christianity's beginnings, before it had acquired any of the cultural, political, and institutional traits that can camouflage its character as a religious movement.

Outline

I. Christianity is the most familiar and least understood of the world religions.

- **A.** Americans in general suffer from a systemic religious illiteracy.
  - **1.** Sophisticated knowledge in other areas is not matched by knowledge about religion.
  - **2.** Ignorance about religion is revealed in everyday life and in the popular media.
- **B.** Despite its cultural familiarity, Christianity remains little known as a religion.
  - **1.** Educated adults have a smattering of knowledge about other world faiths.
  - **2.** The same educated adults know little about the dominant faith of the West.
- **C.** Common perceptions of Christianity combine ignorance and emotion.
  - **1.** Committed Christians have little sense of their tradition in comparative terms.
  - **2.** "Post-Christians" view this tradition with hostility or contempt.

D. Ignorance of Christianity is more striking in light of its remarkable worldwide resurgence.
  1. In terms of adherents, it is globally by far the largest religious tradition.
  2. Its growth in the First World, as well as in the Third World, is a puzzle to those who think it a moribund and discredited tradition.

E. Christianity's success is better understood when it is perceived as a powerful and persuasive religion.

II. Christianity's historical immediacy obscures its nature as a religion.

A. As an "official religion," Christianity has shaped the contemporary world.
  1. Since the time of Constantine, Christianity has played a role in political rule.
  2. In Europe, Christianity provided the form for the culture called "Christendom." It has profoundly shaped the arts, especially painting (from the Middle Ages to Salvador Dali); music (from Gregorian chants to Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Pie Jesu*); literature; and philosophy (Christian Platonism and Scholasticism).
  3. As an instrument of colonialism, Christianity has influenced the history of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

B. Christianity is best known in its "official" form (political and institutional).
  1. The history of Christianity and world history intermingle at every level.
  2. Christianity tends to be identified with its doctrines, moral teachings, and institutional arrangements.

C. Christianity as a "religion" among other religions is less known.
  1. Christian scholars only slowly unknot political and cultural entanglements.
  2. Comparative study of world and "primitive" religions tends to exempt Christianity.

III. The study of the origins of Christianity helps in grasping its religious character.

A. Such study does not accept the implicit identification of "origins" with "essence."

1. That is a theological project masquerading as history.
2. The developed forms of a religion can reveal its essence, as well as its origins.

B. The study of origins is nevertheless critical for understanding Christianity as a religion.

1. It enables contextual comparison with the religious traditions of paganism (Greco-Roman religion) and Judaism.
2. It sees Christianity before its political and cultural triumphs, which tend to obscure its religious character.
3. It clarifies the elements that first made Christianity appealing and, perhaps, continue to draw adherents despite political and cultural entanglements.

IV. This course seeks to understand Christianity by analyzing the religious dimensions of its birth and first development.

A. We begin with theoretical considerations concerning the nature of religion, the importance of religious experience, and the methods for studying religion in antiquity.

B. We then place Christianity in its context by examining religious patterns and examples of religious experience in Greco-Roman and Jewish culture.

C. We examine several dimensions of earliest Christianity in its experience of the divine, in each case continuing the process of comparison with other ancient traditions.

D. We see how Christianity maintained and transformed its religious character as it developed through its first three centuries.

Supplementary Reading:

N. Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), 3–23.

M. J. Weaver, *Introduction to Christianity*, 3rd edition, with D. Brakke and J. Bivins (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 1998).

Questions to Consider:

1. What cultural forces are at work in making contemporary Americans so ignorant regarding religion in general and Christianity in particular?

2. Is the distinction that this lecture draws between “religion” and “culture” one that is legitimate for other religious traditions, or even for Christianity itself?

Lecture Two
What Is a Religion?

Scope: Defining religion is more than a lively parlor game; it is critical to understanding one of the most pervasive aspects of human existence. Not surprisingly, definitions of religion disagree even on basic points. Such definitions are important heuristically. They may not capture the essence of the subject, but they can point us toward some true elements. Thus, inadequate definitions in terms of membership, ritual, belief, and morals enable a more adequate definition in terms of a way of life organized around what is perceived as ultimate power. The perception of ultimate power involves religious experience. The organization of life in terms of ritual, doctrine, morals, and fellowship mediates power, while mysticism claims unmediated access to ultimate power.

Outline

I. If we approach Christianity as a religion, then some definition of religion would be useful, even though definitions of subjects so pervasive and complex are difficult.

A. Some classic definitions of religion indicate both the limitations and the usefulness of the process of defining.

1. In the early 19th century, Friedrich Schleiermacher defined the essence of religion as "a feeling of absolute dependence."

2. Rudolf Otto, in the 20th century, in his *Idea of the Holy*, defined religion as "that which grows out of and gives expression to the experience of the holy in its various aspects."

3. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead says that religion is what an individual does with his solitariness.

4. In contrast, Emile Durkheim, the founder of sociology, described religion as "social."

5. Immanuel Kant, the Enlightenment philosopher, defined religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.

6. John Dewey, the American philosopher, refers to the religious as any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal against obstacles

and in spite of threats of personal loss because of its general and enduring value.

7. Paul Tillich's definition of religion has been very influential in the field of theology. He says that religion is a matter of being grasped by an "ultimate concern," which qualifies all our other concerns as preliminary and contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our lives.
8. Sigmund Freud described religion as comparable to a "childhood neurosis" and "wish fulfillment."
9. Karl Marx defined religion as a "sign of the oppressed creature—the opium of the people."

B. Three major kinds of definition have been applied to religion.

1. The essential definition seeks some ideal center to religion that can be used to measure its various manifestations and counterfeits. A classical example is Van der Leeuw's book *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*.
2. The functional definition is less concerned with what religion is than what religion does for the individual or for the group.
3. The descriptive definition seeks primarily to describe how religion appears to the observer—it begins with the phenomena, rather than seeking functions or essence. The elements come first, then we examine the functions, and perhaps last, seek the essence.

C. The descriptive approach works best when we are asking about *a* religion rather than about religion.

II. A descriptive definition can be approached by considering four inadequate definitions of religion.

A. A religion might be defined in terms of membership in a group.

1. The most obvious way of designating a person as religious is also the least adequate.
2. The inadequacy of the definition is clear from the ease by which exceptions can be named: ways in which social gatherings are not religious and ways in which religion can be private (or antisocial).

B. A religion might be defined in terms of ritual behavior.

1. Rituals are patterns of repetitive, non-rational behavior.

2. The resemblance between religious ritual and obsessive-compulsive behavior was noted by Freud and suggests the limits of the definition.

C. A religion might be defined in terms of belief or doctrine.
1. Although belief and teaching is central to some religious traditions, it is almost absent from others.
2. Systems of belief and teaching are also found in non-religious forms.

D. A religion might be defined in terms of morality.
1. Although some religious traditions contain moral standards, not all do, and religion has sometimes advocated immoral behavior.
2. Likewise, a strong moral code can be found outside religions and even opposed to religion.

III. A more adequate descriptive definition of a religion must include what is found there either uniquely or in a degree not found elsewhere.

A. A working definition of religion includes these elements:
1. Religion is a way of life,
2. Is organized around experiences and convictions, and
3. Concerns ultimate power.

B. Because of historical and conceptual proximity, it is important, if possible, to distinguish magic and religion.
1. Sociologically, "magic" often functions as a way of scapegoating strange religion.
2. Religion and magic can be distinguished, however, with regard to the key issues of pragmatism and control of power.

IV. The various elements in the "way of life" that is a religion serve to mediate its experiences and convictions concerning ultimate power.

A. Fellowship or community is the social vehicle for the transmission of tradition, including the symbolic world shared by adherents.

B. Ritual is the social expression of identity that identifies the location of power through the demarcation of sacred time and space.

C. Doctrine is the articulated and explicit form of belief that lies embedded in the myth and ritual of the community.

D. Morality identifies the modes of non-ritual behavior that are appropriate to the experiences and convictions concerning ultimate power.

E. Mysticism, finally, is that dimension of a religion that seeks an unmediated access to the ultimate power.

Essential Reading:

J. C. Livingston, *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), 3–50.

Supplementary Reading:

G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 1: 23–182.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can the definition of religion in terms of a way of life organized around power serve as a means of analyzing other human behavior, such as addiction?
2. Magic and religion have always been sibling rivals. How is the relationship to power distinct in the two phenomena?

Lecture Three
The Role of Religious Experience

Scope: Good reasons exist to explain why students of religion are ambivalent about the topic of religious experience. Science generally has trouble with human experience as evidence, and the more religious studies tries to be scientific (using etic methods), the less attractive claims to religious experience (using emic discourse) seem. Excluding personal experience, however, means distorting any analysis of human activity. And personal experience—both individual and communal—is such a fundamental aspect of religion that its role must be considered. An analysis of Joachim Wach's definition of religious experience provides a framework for approaching early Christianity and suggests how both etic and emic evidence can enrich such study.

Outline

I. Although religious experience is a key element in any religion, the difficulties of analyzing any human experience make it a subject that science prefers to avoid if possible.

- **A.** In contrast to public events that are open to description, experience is irreducibly individual, somatic, interpreted, and made available through participant testimony.
  - **1.** For experience to be made available to others, it needs emic expression, that is, it needs to be expressed by the individuals having the experience.
  - **2.** Science always prefers the universal, abstract, and objective fact that is available to etic analysis, that is, the tools and observations of scientists.
- **B.** Refusing to take the experiential into account means losing critical knowledge of reality.
  - **1.** Some dimensions of human reality are almost entirely constituted by the experiential, for example, the arts.
  - **2.** When the experiential is eliminated, the very essence of some historical events is lost, for example, the Holocaust.

II. The problems associated with religious experience are of an even greater magnitude.

- **A.** Religious experience is notoriously impossible to verify.
  - **1.** It is analogous to claims to the experience of pleasure or pain.
  - **2.** Even if sincere, it involves entities not available to the perception of observers.
  - **3.** All too frequently, it can be faked for the sake of gain or influence.
- **B.** What is distinctively "religious" about religious experience is especially hard to detect.
  - **1.** Religious experience lies on a continuum of experiences that more or less resemble it.
  - **2.** Religious experience is invariably contextualized by cultural conditions and the symbols available for interpretation.
- **C.** Scholars have difficulty maintaining detachment in this area, because they all have a stake.
- **D.** Scholars refusing to use such terms as "transcendence" and demanding only etic methods sometimes are ideologically opposed to the truth of any claims concerning "ultimate power."
- **E.** In contrast, some scholars who privilege the emic and use language about transcendence are biased toward the truth of religious claims.
- **F.** The challenge is to find a way of speaking about religious experience that neither confuses accurate analysis (that is, mystifies) nor contains a built-in bias for certain traditions (that is, privileges).

III. Joachim Wach provides a working definition of religious experience that has genuine heuristic value.

- **A.** The definition: Religious experience is a response of the whole person to what is perceived as ultimate, characterized by a peculiar intensity, and issuing in appropriate action (e.g., becoming a Good Samaritan).
- **B.** An analysis of each of the terms of the definition suggests how it can become an important analytic tool, particularly the element of "issuing in appropriate action."

1. All power organizes around itself; the greater the perceived power, the greater the capacity to organize (e.g., falling in love).
2. It is possible to move from patterns of organization ("way of life") that are accessible to observation to the "experience of power" that is not.

IV. The category of religious experience is particularly important in the analysis of early Christianity.

A. It is essential if we are to make sense of the claims made by the earliest Christian literature itself, which are essentially claims about power being exercised and experienced in people's lives.

B. It is the only way in which the emergence of Christianity out of the contexts of paganism and Judaism—similar to each, different from both—can be made intelligible.

C. It provides the key to behavior—as in the case of the Apostle Paul— that in other terms remains incomprehensible.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 39–68.

Supplementary Reading:

S. B. Twiss and W. H. Conser, Jr., eds., *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion* (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1992), 1–73.

J. Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 27–58.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is the realm of the experiential so troublesome to those committed to a scientific theory of knowledge?
2. How does "issuing in appropriate action" distinguish religious experience from other powerful experiences, such as the aesthetic?

Lecture Four
Sourcing Christianity

Scope: In its earliest expressions, Christianity drew from religious patterns in both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures. Christian claims and convictions become more intelligible when placed in those overlapping contexts. We are limited in our access to all ancient religious traditions because of the nature of those traditions, the origin and nature of the sources, and the accidents of their preservation. Ancient literary and archaeological evidence can be amplified and clarified by the use of comparative methods drawn from the social sciences. Still further methodological considerations are involved when we turn explicitly to nascent Christianity itself: What sources are available, and how are they to be read? A phenomenological approach that uses every available source and means of analysis enables the richest sense of Christianity as a religious experience and movement.

Outline

I. The first decision demanded of those seeking to engage and understand earliest Christianity as a religion concerns focus.

A. Two approaches to the subject dominate the field but miss the specific subject with which we are concerned.

1. A historical approach analyzes the ancient evidence to reconstruct specific events in their chronological sequence and in their causal relations.

2. A theological approach analyzes the ancient evidence to determine the nature and the logical relations between explicit teachings having to do with belief or morals.

B. A religious analysis has its own distinctive character.

1. It concentrates less on unique public events (as history does) and more on the relation between individual experience and constant social patterns.

2. It concentrates less on the explicit and reflective language of theology and ethics and more on the implicit and direct discourse of religious performance.

C. Religious phenomena are connected but not to be identified with history and theology.

1. Historical and cultural contexts are important for grasping the character of religious phenomena, and religious behavior can affect and undergo historical development.

2. Religious language of ritual and prayer is the first-order discourse that serves as the raw material of the second-order discourse of theology.

II. Once a definite focus is established, the second question concerns the sources for the study of earliest Christianity as a religion.

A. The study of ancient religion lacks some of the sources that are critical to the study of contemporary religion.

1. We have no oral records of religious performance or testimony and relatively few firsthand accounts of religious experience.

2. We lack the sort of firsthand eyewitness observation of religious behavior that has proven so fruitful for the understanding of present-day religions.

3. We lack the demographic data that would enable statistical analyses of group behavior.

4. We must gather evidence indirectly from sources that often are not concerned with religion as such. The sources available for analysis of the past include archaeological and literary materials.

B. Archaeological materials include architectural remains, inscriptions, paintings, statuary, and a variety of artifacts ranging from domestic wares to funerary inscriptions.

C. Literary compositions fall into various genres: laws, ritual and magical texts, travel narratives, biographies, histories, novels, and revelational treatises.

D. The proportion of literary and archaeological materials differs for the three religious traditions with which we are concerned.

1. For Greco-Roman religion, archaeological evidence is rich and important, whereas literary evidence is relatively sparse.

2. In Judaism, we have some archaeological evidence for the first three centuries of the common era that is extremely important, whereas literary evidence, although important, is often difficult to date.

3. In early Christianity, there is no archaeological evidence clearly identifiable as Christian before 180 C.E., while literary evidence must include both canonical (biblical) and non-canonical materials.

E. There are intractable limits to the sources and, therefore, to the kinds of claims that can be made about these ancient religious traditions.

1. The sources are partial in the sense that much of what was done was never written and, if written, not preserved.
2. The sources are also partial in the sense that they represent the perspectives of those who were well off, literate, and enthusiastic.

III. Given the uncertain state of the sources, the methods used to deal with them is particularly important if we are to learn as much as we can.

A. A broadly phenomenological approach is one that sees a subject from as many angles as possible, seeks the interrelationship of things rather than their causes, and is fundamentally noninvasive with respect to the sources.

B. The coincidence of three interrelated and intercommunicating religious traditions in the Mediterranean world means that comparison can be used in three ways: to amplify partial information, to identify common patterns, and to sharpen specific differences.

C. A phenomenological approach can also make use of social scientific studies that enable the information from antiquity to be amplified by means of even wider cross-cultural analysis.

Supplementary Reading:

C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illustrate Christian Origins*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

E. J. Goodspeed, *A History of Early Christian Literature*, rev. and enlarged by R. M. Grant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

G. W. E. Nicklesburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

Questions to Consider:

1. How important is the distinction made in this lecture between "religious discourse" and "theology"? Is it correct to say that a fundamental difference exists between praying and thinking or talking about prayer?
2. The lecture insists that because of the condition of the sources, all claims about ancient religion must be modest. Should the same caution apply to analyses of contemporary religious phenomena?

Lecture Five
The Imperial Context

Scope: Christianity came to birth in the Mediterranean world of the 1st century C.E., whose several layers of culture—including ancient patterns deeply resistant to fundamental change—all affected the development of this new religion. Politically, the world was ruled by Rome, which had recently made the transition from a republic to an empire. Culturally, the world was dominated by the ideals of Greek civilization, which had been spread as far as India by Alexander the Great. Alexander sought a pan-Hellenic world through the dissemination of Greek language, culture, and religion. But the realities of empire transformed those ideals, demanding new responses from philosophy and religion. Among the attractive options available for spiritual seekers was the ancient Hebrew national religion (Judaism), which had spread across the Greco-Roman world and was the immediate context out of which Christianity emerged.

Outline

I. The symbolic world of early Christianity consists in four distinct cultural realms that are closely interwoven.

- **A.** A symbolic world is made up of the social structures and the social meanings that express and support those structures.
- **B.** At the most basic level, "Mediterranean culture" exhibits certain constant characteristics in every period.
  - **1.** Some of these characteristics are connected to topography, climate, and economy.
  - **2.** Some are constants of social interaction, such as the system of patronage and the accompanying emphasis on shame and honor.
  - **3.** Some are expressed by the dominant religious system of polytheism.
- **C.** Since the time of Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.E.), the dominant cultural force in the Mediterranean was Hellenism.
  - **1.** From the middle of the 2nd century B.C.E., Rome had steadily taken political control over the Mediterranean, but Greek

culture continued in that framework; thus, "Greco-Roman culture."

2. Christianity took root and first appeared as a sect of Judaism, which existed both in Palestine and in communities throughout the Diaspora.

II. To understand the immediate context for the religious patterns of the 1st century C.E., it is important to perceive the gap between Hellenistic ideals and realities, a gap caused above all by the fact of empire.

A. Alexander the Great's ideal was to create a single, pan-Hellenic civilization, based on the principles of the classical Athens he admired.

1. The tools of Hellenization were language (*koine*, Greek), the institutions of the *polis* (city-state)—such as the gymnasium and military school—intermarriage, and religious syncretism.
2. The goal was to universalize the intense life of civic participation that was found in the greatest of Greek cities and to break down barriers between people. This idea is expressed by the word "cosmopolitan," meaning "the world is my city."

B. Despite the founding of Hellenistic cities and the spread of Greek language and cultural institutions, Alexander's success was mixed.

1. Politically, the Greek Empire divided itself and quickly became prey to the stronger will of Rome.
2. Culturally, the world of Asia was made Greek, but the resulting "Hellenism" was also deeply affected by the conquered cultures.
3. Above all, the mere fact of empire meant that the attempt to franchise local identity was doomed to failure.

C. For many in the 1st-century Roman Empire, conditions of life made the bright dream of cosmopolitanism a nightmare of alienation and anomie.

D. Among those conditions were the size of cities, the loss of local self-determination (everything is ultimately answerable to the empire), the presence of military forces, the severe stratification of society (including mass slavery), and the threat of coercion.

E. People at the highest and lowest levels of society were least affected by social change and its accompanying threat to the symbolic world, whereas those in the middle were most affected.

These were tradespeople, travelers, and craftsmen. These were the sort of people who joined cults and became the first Christians.

III. The conditions of empire severely challenge traditional forms of religion and philosophy.

A. In the classical period, the polytheistic religious system functioned in a public fashion to support the civic life of the *polis*. Each city had its own patron gods or goddesses.

B. The period of empire sees the development of two religious symbols, "fate" and "chance," that express the sociological realities of alienation and anomie.

C. In response to this situation, philosophy narrows its focus and concentrates on the individual and the household rather than on the state (the empire was like a fact of nature) by emphasizing private and domestic virtue; it turns from theory to therapy. The philosophers tried to help people live in a world they could not change.

D. New patterns of religious activity likewise emerge in response to the need for identity and a sense of belonging, such as the proliferation of mystery cults.

E. Judaism is perceived by many Greeks and Romans—and by many of its adherents—as a particularly appealing form of philosophy and a particularly ancient form of mystery religion.

F. Christianity developed under these circumstances, not in isolation, but as a rival to other claimants to religious and philosophical significance.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 21–41.

Supplementary Reading:

K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 2nd rev. ed., with G. T. Griffith (New York: World Publishing, 1952).

Questions to Consider:

1. Given that the genius of Greek civilization was the local culture of the *polis*, why was the attempt to franchise Greek identity bound to fail?
2. Why do social dislocations most affect those in the middle of each society, rather than those at the very top or the very bottom?

Lecture Six
Greco-Roman Polytheism

Scope: Both Judaism and early Christianity looked askance at "paganism," but great caution should be taken in assessing their polemical perspectives. Greco-Roman culture was permeated by religiosity of every sort. The basic understanding of the divine was polytheistic, and religious behavior in general both reflected and reinforced the cultural system called patronage. In addition to a variety of public ritual observances that helped shore up society and to the complex patterns of piety (and magic) that gave meaning to private lives, the period of the early empire saw a proliferation of more spectacular religious phenomena, including prophecy, healing, and initiation into mystery cults. Even some forms of philosophy took on a religious character.

Outline

I. Any positive appreciation of the religious life of Greco-Roman culture must begin by eliminating a powerful and threefold bias.

- **A.** Ancient Christian sources are uniformly hostile toward all forms of pagan religious observance.
  - **1.** Christian apologists found some virtues in pagan philosophy, especially in Platonism.
  - **2.** Pagan worship, however, was regarded as lacking in morality and was dismissed as sponsored by demons (see Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, 10:20–21).
- **B.** These Christian perceptions built on and expanded the intense polemic against paganism found already in Judaism.
- **C.** Both Jews and Christians found fuel for their polemical fires in the critique of pagan religiosity found among some Greco-Roman philosophers.
- **D.** Awareness of the ancient bias and closer analysis of Greco-Roman religious texts provide a more dispassionate perception.

II. If religion is a way of life organized around experiences and convictions concerning ultimate reality (above all, power), then Greco-Roman religion is both all-encompassing and diffuse.

A. In polytheism (a system shared broadly throughout antiquity), the divine power is distributed among a family of gods.
  1. The Roman adoption and translation of the Greek gods was a first instance of syncretism that was perpetuated through the conquests of new peoples (Zeus becomes Jupiter, Hermes becomes Mercury, and so on).
  2. Polytheism is a capacious and generous religious system that always has room for new members, that sees the membrane between humans and the divine as permeable, and that relaxes the issues of theodicy that haunt monotheism.
  3. These same qualities represent, from another perspective, the weakness of polytheism: Polytheism lacks a clear sense of justice that monotheism can supply; the Homeric gods often represented the lowest forms of human morality—and the reason why some Greeks and Romans sought alternatives.

B. Greco-Roman religion did not occupy a separate and private sphere but pervaded every aspect of life.
  1. Worship of the gods was a political function in the strict sense of the term; atheism was the equivalent of treason.
  2. Temples were places of worship but also served as treasuries and banks, as well as places of refuge.
  3. Every part of the universe and every human activity—civic, military, domestic, personal—fell under the power and protection of a god who needed attention for life to be prosperous.
  4. In many ways, the religious system strongly mirrored the social dynamic of patronage and the social warrants of honor and shame.
  5. The practice of magic can be placed in this system as the effort to more directly manipulate the available powers through secret knowledge.

III. In the Greco-Roman polytheistic framework, several religious phenomena are noteworthy for their ability to make power more palpably present.

A. Prophecy was highly regarded as a revelation of divine power.
  1. Some forms of divination (such as the auspices) were routine exercises of technique.

2. Mantic prophecy was feared and respected as an infusion of the divine breath into humans ("enthusiasm"); the shrine of Apollo at Delphi guided early Greek history, and the decline of oracles was a religious crisis.

B. The healing of physical and mental disorders also revealed divine power.

1. The capacity to drive out evil spirits or to heal the sick was a sign that a human being was a *theios aner* (a "divine man"; see Apollonius of Tyana).
2. The shrine of Asclepius at Epidaurus was like an ancient Lourdes, drawing pilgrims for spiritual and physical healing.

C. Mystery cults offered participation in deeper realities, as well as social advancement.

1. The ancient cult of Eleusis remained the prime example of a civic mystery connected to a specific place.
2. Other mysteries of a more transient character and associated with new (or syncretic) deities proliferated: Isis and Osiris, Attis and Cybele, Serapis, Mithras.

IV. Some forms of Greco-Roman philosophy in the early empire also had distinct religious features.

A. The Pythagorean and Epicurean traditions were organized "ways of life" based on the teachings and deeds of founders who were regarded as divine.

B. Some Stoic-Cynic philosophers, such as Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom, had a sense of divine vocation.

C. Philosophers challenged the morality of the ancient myths and sought to improve them through allegorical interpretation.

Supplementary Reading:

D. Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

R. M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969).

R. Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, trans. A. Nevill (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

Questions to Consider:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of polytheism as a religious system, above all with respect to "the problem of evil"?
2. How does the Jewish and Christian dismissal of "paganism" miss important dimensions of Greco-Roman religion?

Lecture Seven
Greco-Roman Religious Experience

Scope: Although our extant evidence is slender, it is sufficient to warn against oversimplifications of ancient religiosity. People in Greco-Roman culture seemed to demonstrate the same range of attitudes toward ultimate power as people do today. At one extreme are the superstitious and at the other are the skeptical. Between them, we find a range of religious responses. Three examples give us a sense of genuine religious experience in antiquity. The first is the piety shown by the philosopher Epictetus. The second is the devotion demonstrated by the chronically ill rhetorician Aelius Aristides. The third is the fictional history of Lucius, whose metamorphoses from human to beast and back to a restored humanity through the intervention of the goddess Isis is described by Apuleius's novel, *The Golden Ass*.

Outline

I. The Greco-Roman world saw as wide a range of religious attitudes and responses as any other.

- **A.** At one extreme are the people who seem to have virtually no religious instinct, operating completely in a secular perspective, such as the characters in Petronius's novel, *Satyricon*.
- **B.** At the other extreme are the hyper-religious whose fearful patterns of observance earned them the designation of the "superstitious," a type included in the character sketches of Theophrastus in the 4th century B.C.E.
- **C.** The satirist Lucian of Samosata shows how the sophisticated could either provide a philosophical critique of superstition (see *Demonax*) or manipulate the religious longings of the populace (see *Alexander the False Prophet*).
- **D.** Between the extremes of skepticism and credulity, the Greco-Roman world reveals a variety of religious experiences.

II. Dio Chrysostom and Epictetus embody examples of a philosophical piety that was based on a divine call and moral transformation.

A. Dio Chrysostom (40–120 C.E.) was a rhetorician whose practice of public speaking took on a new urgency and goal because of a conversion experience (*Oration* 13).

1. Chrysostom was paid to deliver public discourses on behalf of cities.

2. He suffered a philosopher's fate in being exiled in 82 C.E.

3. In exile, he had time to reflect on his life and on the lives of heroes of antiquity, including Odysseus, who wandered the world, and King Croesus, who consulted an oracle.

4. Likewise, Chrysostom decided to consult an oracle, who told him to continue to wander the world, speaking in public, but not for pay.

5. Thus, Chrysostom gradually became known as a philosopher.

6. His story is a kind of conversion story.

B. Epictetus is the classic model of Stoic-Cynic philosophy as a form of religious response.

1. The circumstances of his life appear to imprison him. He is a slave, exiled, and physically disabled, yet his manner of life and his words transcend those conditions.

2. His discourse on the call of the Cynic (III, 22) and his praise of providence reveal his deeply religious understanding of life.

3. He believed that would-be philosophers must first be chosen by God (Zeus) to speak in public and reform their moral lives if they aspired to be messengers from God, sent to change the lives of others.

III. The rhetorician Aelius Aristides provides a personal glimpse of the religious spirit that was present in the desire for healing.

A. Much of Aristides's adult life was dominated by chronic illness and his search for a cure through the ministrations of the healing god, Asclepius.

B. His *Sacred Tales* shows in vivid fashion how the perception of ultimate power (in this case, the shrine of the healing god) organizes this ancient scholar's space and time.

C. At healing shrines, therapy was both physical and spiritual, including the interpretation of dreams.

D. Odysseus is often cited in these stories as an example of religious devotion and the endurance of hardship.

IV. *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius is an invaluable source for several aspects of ancient religious experience.

A. Also known as *Metamorphoses*, the novel is a picaresque tale that shows the hero (Lucius) undergoing several kinds of changes as a consequence of his encounters with spiritual power.

B. The motivations and mischief associated with the practice of magic provide the impetus for the story—Lucius is changed from a human into a beast.

1. In this degraded condition, he undergoes a series of experiences and hears a series of tales.

2. One encounter is with the ecstatic eunuch priests of the goddess Cybele.

C. Lucius's encounter with the goddess Isis and the series of initiations he undergoes show the understanding of religious conversion as a restoration to full humanity.

1. The encounter with Isis is a religious experience of vision or epiphany.

2. Isis demands that Lucius become initiated into her cult. Initiation has both spiritual and social benefits.

3. The story of Psyche and Eros embedded in *The Golden Ass* may provide insight into the mythic understanding of initiation into the mystery.

Essential Reading:

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. R. Graves (New York: Farrer, Strauss and Giroux, 1951).

Supplementary Reading:

W. Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greco-Roman Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

M. W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987).

Questions to Consider:

1. How do accounts of religious experience tend to modify the standard impression of Greco-Roman religion as merely formal, superficial, and unconnected to moral behavior?
2. What distinction does Apuleius's *Golden Ass* make between the power of magic and the power of religion?

Lecture Eight
The Symbolic World of Torah

Scope: Judaism in the 1st century was a vibrant and complex phenomenon. Rooted in ancient Israelite religion, it had developed new manifestations shaped by diverse geographical locations, linguistic expressions, and social settings. Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism show distinct characteristics, but even Palestinian Judaism was internally divided. Despite their differences, all Jews shared the same basic story, convictions, symbols, and practices, which, taken as a whole, can be called the symbolic world of Torah. The religious life of Jews in Palestine revolved around three main loci. The most public and powerful was the Temple, the center of sacrifice and prayer and the gathering place of the people on great feasts. More central to the transmission of the traditions of Torah was the synagogue located in every village. And in the home, the observance of the Sabbath marked the distinctive identity of Jews.

Outline

I. Judaism in the 1st century was based in ancient Israelite religion but had developed in significant ways as a vibrant, growing, and complex tradition.

A. In contrast to "biblical religion" of antiquity and to the stable "Talmudic tradition" that emphasized continuity and uniformity, Judaism in the Hellenistic period was above all diverse in its expressions.

1. Jews lived throughout the Mediterranean world; for hundreds of years, more Jews lived in the Diaspora than in Palestine.

2. Jewish life and literature developed not only in classical Hebrew (mostly written) but also in Aramaic and in Greek.

3. The different cultural and political contexts existing in Palestine and in the Diaspora influenced the development of distinctive expressions of Jewish identity.

4. Especially in Palestine itself, the presence of an aggressive Greek culture and an oppressive Roman Empire generated ideological clashes among Jews.

B. Yet in the eyes of outsiders, Jews were remarkably homogeneous and could be distinguished in the 1st century as a "second race" in Greco-Roman culture. Because they tended to live in tightly knit communities, they were even more highly visible to Greco-Roman observers—some estimate that, in the eastern part of the empire, as many as one in five of the population was Jewish and in the western part of the empire, one in ten.

II. Although Judaism was diverse, it was also a coherent tradition that was organized around the symbolic world of Torah.

A. Judaism retained its identity as the *ethos* (custom) of an *ethnos* (nation or people). Being a "child of Abraham" meant literally to be part of a family through maternal descent, but Gentiles also converted to the tradition as proselytes (those who come over).

B. Despite the importance of the Temple, the land, and the kingship as identifying symbols, Judaism was most clearly defined by its commitment to and conversations about Torah.

1. Torah refers first to a collection of literary compositions that made up the TANAK, or Scripture: the first five books of Moses (also "the Law") were Torah in the strictest sense, but the term also included the Prophets (Nebiim) and the Writings (Ketubim—Proverbs and so on). It is roughly the same collection that Christians call the Old Testament.

a. It was written in classical Hebrew, but by 250 B.C.E., the entire collection had been translated into Greek, reportedly by seventy scholars, all of whom agreed on every letter of their translation through divine inspiration.

b. This translation came to be called the Septuagint (LXX). This was the Bible for Jews in the Western Diaspora for some three hundred years.

2. Torah in a broader sense encompasses the narrative of the people who read these texts: the story that had its prologue in prehistory, became a family story with Abraham, a foundational epic with Moses, and a national history with David and his successors.

3. The texts and the story they tell also communicate the central convictions and principles: the distinctive belief in one God, the sense of election as a people (a Chosen People), the

consciousness of covenant, and the articulation of covenant through God's commandments.

4. Finally, Torah includes all the ways in which those convictions are expressed through practice: In the 1st century, all Jews held to circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath and some forms of purity and dietary observance.

III. A review of the three loci gives some sense of the dominant religious patterns of Judaism in Palestine.

A. The Temple in Jerusalem is a powerful expression of the presence of the divine and the unity of the people.

1. Despite internal debates concerning the legitimacy of the Temple and despite competing versions (both real and ideal), the Jerusalem Temple was both one of the wonders of the ancient world and a vibrant heart of Judaism as a religion.
2. Unlike the many temples devoted to the many gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon, the single Temple expressed both divine and human unity.
3. The Temple served as a treasury, a place of teaching, a place of prayer, and above all, the place where sacrifices were offered in honor of God.
4. The Temple was the ultimate expression of sacred space and sacred time organized around the holy. As sacred space, it was the center of all Jewish thought and piety, and the annual feasts that marked the sacred times of Jewish history were celebrated by pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple.

B. Another locus for Jewish prayer and study was the synagogue, or house of study, located in every Jewish village, as well as in Jerusalem and the Temple itself.

1. The synagogue served as a local gathering place, the center for communal prayer and the study of Torah, the settling of community disputes by the elders of the people, and the distribution of assistance to the poor people of the community.
2. The synagogue was notable in antiquity for a mode of worship that was "spiritual," that is, unconnected to animal sacrifice and devoted to the study of texts, preaching, and prayer.
3. Both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, the synagogue was the institution that attracted Gentile adherents and enabled

Judaism to grow and thrive even after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.

C. The strong focus in Judaism on the family is expressed by the home as an expression of religious tradition.
   1. The teaching of the commandments and of the practices of piety were nurtured in the context of the household.
   2. The home was the setting for the weekly Sabbath observance, which gave a special place of prominence to the mother of the family.
   3. The family (sometimes extended or fictive) was also the unit of celebration for the Passover seder.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 43–70.

Supplementary Reading:

S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987).

W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 1994). Vol. 1: *The Persian Age*, Vol. 2: *The Hellenistic Age*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the distinctive convictions and practices of Judaism set its adherents apart as a "second people" in the Greco-Roman world?
2. Why is the designation "Torah" a more adequate expression of the central symbol of Judaism than "Law"?

Lecture Nine

Palestinian Judaism in the Greco-Roman World

Scope: The competing sects of Judaism in Palestine represent different ways of expressing Jewish identity in response to Roman rule and Hellenistic culture, by emphasizing one or the other of Judaism's shared symbols in patterns of passive or active resistance. Sometimes these political and ideological conflicts are so highlighted that the deep religious character of Palestinian Judaism can be obscured. Four examples provide evidence for the consistency and variety of Jewish piety in Palestine: the apocalyptic longings of *2 Baruch*; the healings associated with the Galilean Chasid, Chanina ben Dosa; the prayers of the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness; and the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist.

Outline

I. Jewish religious life in Palestine at the time Christianity was born was shaped by the tension between ancestral traditions and a hegemonic Greco-Roman culture.

A. Judaism after the exile of the 6th century B.C.E. was more coherent, self-conscious, and exclusive than the religion of ancient Israel, not least in its tendency to identify religious symbol and social institution.

1. Torah was to be the law of the land; the worship of one God meant the formation of a single people through endogamous marriage.

2. The Temple and the kingship were to be restored as the symbols and the social expressions of Jewish independence.

B. This sharpened sense of boundaries encountered an aggressive Hellenistic culture—and a forceful Roman rule—that threatened Jews at every point.

C. The resulting tensions led not only to forms of resistance to Greco-Roman culture and rule, through rebellion and war from the Maccabees to Bar Kochba (with the resulting destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and final razing of Jerusalem in 135 C.E.), but also to complex patterns of conflict among Jews themselves

concerning the necessary connection between religious symbol and social institution.

II. The divisions between Jews in Palestine involved different perceptions of how Judaism should relate to the dominant culture.

A. The "sects" within Palestinian Judaism, as described by Josephus and the New Testament, represent only a small and elite portion of the population, while the majority of the "people of the land" (*am ha-aretz*) go unaccounted. These "schools" nevertheless distinguished themselves on the basis of religious symbol and political stance.

1. The Sadducees drew from the aristocratic, priestly classes centered on Temple worship; although conservative in belief, they were accommodating politically.

2. The Pharisees were politically unaligned and formed themselves into intentional communities dedicated to the strict observance of Torah.

3. The Essenes were separatist in ideology and practice, forming a community of the pure as a way of symbolizing protest against the profanation of the land and the Temple. The most famous of the Essenes lived as a desert community in Qumran (the so-called Dead Sea Community).

4. The Zealots made the kingship the central symbol for Judaism and sought to overthrow Roman rule by military force and a group called Sicarii ("dagger-men") by killing Jewish leaders who cooperated with the Romans.

5. Of these four groups, the Pharisees had the best chance of survival, because they organized themselves in mobile communities in cities and did not identify with a physical structure. Pharisaism became the rabbinic tradition of Judaism, which in turn became the classical form of Judaism down to the present day.

B. Patterns of resistance and accommodation are more complex than the division into sects suggests and can be organized into four types of response to Greco-Roman culture and rule.

1. Some Jews were interested in active assimilation. Called "Hellenists" in 1 and 2 Maccabees, they represent a type of response that took the dominant culture as good and sought to accommodate Judaism to it.

2. Other Jews were more passive in their assimilative tendencies. The Sadducees, for example, were politically pliable but faithful to a deeply conservative understanding of Torah.
3. The response of passive resistance found three expressions.
    a. One form was martyrdom, which became important in Judaism at this time and subsequently in Christianity (martyrdom: "witness in blood").
    b. Other forms of passive resistance were the Pharisaic creation of intentional communities that maintained tradition even as their members mingled in society and apocalyptic literature, which created an imaginative alternative to the current state of affairs through subversive visions.
4. Other Jews actively resisted assimilation. The Dead Sea community (the Essenes) organized a life that separated entirely from the dominant ethos and, in the end, went to war against Rome. The Zealots and other militants translated their Jewish loyalty into violent rebellion.
5. Therefore, when Jesus proclaimed the approach of a kingdom of God but did not seem to spell out exactly what that meant, it was not surprising that his message did not receive a neutral interpretation, either politically or religiously.

III. Even in the context of cultural and political conflict, Palestinian Jews exhibit a range of religious experiences.

A. In apocalyptic literature, we find prayer and visions as a means of access to God's plan for the future.
1. Apocalyptic literature possesses distinctive literary features and a dualistic understanding of history.
2. As 4 Ezra 2:41–48 illustrates, such literature also reveals the powerful role played by prayer and visions of the divine realm.

B. Among Galilean Jews, we see the development of wonder-working traditions associated with certain charismatic sages.
1. The nature of rabbinic materials renders historical judgments concerning Honi the Circle Maker and Chanina ben Dosa difficult to make.

2. Stories told about the two rabbis, however, make clear that belief in wonder-working among the saintly—a tradition extending back to Moses and Elijah—remained alive.

C. At Qumran, the Teacher of Righteousness provides firsthand evidence for the deep piety that accompanied the sect's separatist ways.
1. The Teacher of Righteousness plays a key role in the history of the community as its authoritative guide to the meaning of Torah with respect to its history.
2. His hymns of praise (*hodayoth*) show him to be steeped in the language and spirit of the Psalms (see 1QH 11).

D. Around 28 C.E., a Galilean prophet named John experienced the call of prophecy in the Judean wilderness.
1. Both the New Testament and the historian Josephus testify to John's historical significance.
2. John's preaching and practice of baptism were connected to a call for communal and individual repentance among the Jewish population.

Essential Reading:

"4th Ezra," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1983), Vol. 2: 517–559.

"Chanina ben Dosa," in *Documents for the Study of the Gospels*, ed. D. Cartlidge and D. Dungan (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 158–159.

G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1987), 165–207.

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18; Gospel of Luke 1–4.

Supplementary Reading:

E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992).

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the practice of a religious tradition "in place" inevitably involve social structures as well as religious symbols?

2. What do the experiences of Chanina ben Dosa and the Teacher of Righteousness suggest concerning the vibrancy of Judaism in the 1st century of the common era?

Lecture Ten
Judaism in the Hellenistic Diaspora

Scope: Jews in the Diaspora were connected to their compatriots in Palestine in a number of ways, and their allegiance to Torah was no less real. Circumstances of life in the Diaspora, however, enabled Judaism to develop in distinctive ways. Most notably, it enabled an engagement with Greek culture that was more positive and pervasive. Alexandrian Judaism gives us a glimpse of Jewish life in the Hellenistic Diaspora, with the increased importance of the synagogue as the center of community life and with a literature based on the Greek translation of Torah called the Septuagint. Philo of Alexandria provides a chief example of religious experience in the Diaspora, but some elements of his mystical interpretation of Judaism are found elsewhere, especially in the wall paintings of the Synagogue at Dura-Europos.

Outline

I. For hundreds of years before the birth of Christianity, a majority of Jews had lived in the Diaspora, and there, the Jewish tradition developed distinctively.

A. The Diaspora had existed since the time of Jeremiah and, by the 1st century C.E., included Jewish communities organized around synagogues in every part of the known world, from Iraq in the east to Spain in the west.

B. Under the Greek and Roman Empires, Jewish communities had substantial freedom and even certain privileges. For example, they were exempt from military service, were exempt from paying local taxes, had their own courts in the synagogue, and were allowed to practice the Sabbath.

C. The Diaspora that was most important for the future of rabbinic (Talmudic) Judaism was Aramaic speaking and was centered in Babylonia. The Diaspora that was most important for the shaping of Christianity was Greek speaking (thus, "Hellenistic Judaism") and was centered in Alexandria.

1. Alexandria was the great center for Hellenistic learning (because of its renowned library) and was the location of a large and powerful Jewish community.
2. In Alexandria, Torah was translated into Greek around 250 B.C.E. This translation (LXX = The Septuagint) was Scripture for Greek-speaking Jews, who believed it to have been divinely inspired.
3. This translation was also the bible of the first Christians, who adopted the Jewish belief that it had been divinely inspired.
4. The LXX was the basis for an extensive apologetic literature that engaged Greco-Roman culture from the perspective of Jewish convictions.

II. The differences between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism are owed not simply to place and language but, above all, to social context.

A. The conditions of life did not demand the identification of religious symbols and social institutions.
1. The recognition of Judaism as a *religio licita* ("authorized cult") enabled Jews to assert their separate identity in a variety of ways.
2. At the same time, the very pervasiveness of Greek culture invited modes of assimilation that did not threaten that separate identity as a people.

B. Jewish life in the Diaspora centered particularly on the synagogue.
1. The several names for this institution suggest some of its function: "synagogue," *ecclesia*, and *beth ha kenesset* all point to its function as gathering place, whereas *beth ha midrash* denotes study of Torah, *gerousia* signals the function of decision making, and *proseuche* designates a place of worship.
2. The lack of competing institutions helped elevate the pattern of life organized around the synagogue and enabled interested Gentiles to observe and even share that life.

C. Just as Diaspora Jews experienced the tension between separation and assimilation, so did they experience from outsiders the dual response of attraction and repulsion.
1. Attraction to Judaism sometimes led to conversion among Gentiles ("proselytes") and sometimes to a loose association ("God-fearers").

2. It was among the God-fearers that Christianity found its earliest adherents.
3. Repulsion sometimes led to local outbreaks of anti-Semitism, which in turn stimulated the production of a large amount of apologetic (defensive) literature.
4. Attacks on Jews were often made because Jews seemed to insist on being different and were believed to be misanthropic.

III. Philo of Alexandria (30 B.C.E.–45 C.E.) is the most important representative of Hellenistic Jewish religious experience.

A. Philo was a deeply loyal member of the Alexandrian Jewish community who was equally immersed in Greco-Roman culture.
1. His loyalty is demonstrated by his works written in defense of Judaism against popular and official harassment (*Against Faustus*, *Embassy to Gaius*).
2. His Greek culture is shown above all in his allegorical interpretation of the Septuagint through the perspective of Platonic philosophy (see *Allegorical Laws*).
3. In Philo's reading of Scripture, Judaism is construed as the best of all philosophies, and its heroes are portrayed as philosophers (see *Life of Moses*).

B. Philo's personal religious experience is revealed obliquely through his writings.
1. His descriptions of the Essenes and Therapeutai reveal his deep admiration for a life of contemplation (*On the Contemplative Life*).
2. In some brief passages, Philo suggests a personal experience of mysticism (*On the Creation* 71; *On the Cherubim* 48).

IV. How typical was Philo of Hellenistic Judaism?

A. Some argue that he was an isolated figure, but there is sufficient evidence from other Hellenistic Jewish authors to demonstrate that his approach to Torah was widespread.

B. The archaeological discoveries at Dura-Europos, when read in the context of extant literary evidence, point to a "mystical Judaism" in places far away from Alexandria that gave an esoteric meaning to a shared exoteric tradition.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 73–91.

Supplementary Reading:

J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 125–180.

E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935).

Questions to Consider:

1. How did life in the Mediterranean Diaspora provide a positive context for Judaism rather than an "exile"?
2. What does the archaeological evidence from Dura-Europas suggest about the presence of a "mystical Judaism"?

Lecture Eleven
Jesus and the Gospels

Scope: The nature of the Christian Gospels as witnesses and interpretations of Jesus after his death (and resurrection) offer us at best an indirect and second-hand look at the religious experience of this Jew of Galilee. We cannot recover the "historical Jesus," but we can draw some broad inferences concerning the Jesus of the Gospels from the judicious use of the deeds, sayings, and traits ascribed to him by those narratives. Among these are his prophetic consciousness; his sense of an intimate relationship with the God of Israel that expressed itself in a remarkable confidence in his power to heal and in a freedom to transgress social and religious expectations; his radical devotion to the "will of God" expressed by celibacy, poverty, and itinerancy; and his characteristic posture of self-donative service.

Outline

I. The question "What does Jesus of Nazareth have to do with Christianity?" is not as frivolous as it sounds.

- **A.** Next time, we shall see how Christianity begins, not on the basis of Jesus's activity, but on religious experiences concerning Jesus after his death.
- **B.** Everything said about Jesus in early Christian writings (both canonical and non-canonical) comes from communities whose perceptions are "post-Easter."
- **C.** Nevertheless, the historical person Jesus must be taken into account.
  - **1.** He is the central symbol of Christianity and the subject of all its discourse.
  - **2.** The issue of whether the church faithfully represented or fundamentally distorted Jesus has been a debate since the Enlightenment.
  - **3.** The "quest for the historical Jesus" has been one of the dominant theological exercises in Christianity since the Enlightenment: A Jesus purged of "religion" is sought as the norm for a Christianity freed from religion.

II. Although Jesus appears as a subject in virtually all early Christian writings, the canonical and non-canonical Gospels provide indirect and second-hand evidence concerning his historical activity.

A. The Gospels are best understood, not as biographies in the contemporary sense, but as witnesses and interpretations.

1. They use traditions that derive from the oral tradition of Christian communities of the first generation and, in some cases, from companions of Jesus himself.

2. But the Gospel narratives are composed from the perspective of belief in Jesus's resurrection and interpret his ministry from that perspective.

3. The most accessible level of meaning in the Gospels is that shaped by the respective evangelists. Getting at the earlier traditions they used is more difficult; harder still is finding the facts about Jesus.

B. As literary compositions, the Gospels present extraordinarily complex problems to those posing historical questions.

1. The earliest Gospels composed (Mark, Matthew, Luke; from between 70–85 C.E.) are called "the Synoptics" because they share so much material and are literarily interdependent. Matthew and Luke use Mark and share a source sometimes called "Q."

2. The Gospel of John (ca. 90 C.E.) shares some traditions about Jesus with the Synoptics but presents a picture of Jesus that is markedly distinct.

3. The apocryphal (meaning: not in the canon of the New Testament) Gospels are the latest written (between the 2nd and 4th centuries C.E.) and range from versions that contain valuable Jesus traditions (notably, the Gospel of Thomas) to those that are legendary (such as the Infancy Gospel of James).

4. Much of the material is not accessible to historical analysis, such as working wonders or experiencing a transfiguration.

5. The accounts differ dramatically on very important points.

6. The Gospels do not give access to Jesus's motivations or his psychology.

C. Faced with such problems, scholars tend to follow one of three approaches to the Gospels.

1. Some emphasize their historic reliability (the maximalist position), but the differences in the Gospels are a huge problem for this approach.
2. Some emphasize the creativity of the community—the story of Jesus's life as depicted in the Gospels is a creation of the Christian community (the minimalist position). This runs into the problem that many of Jesus's deeds and sayings do not make any sense outside of the 1st-century Palestinian context, especially the parables, which clearly have an air of authenticity.
3. Some acknowledge both the role of the community and the tradition (the dialectical approach).

III. Using appropriate historiographical methods, it is possible to make responsible judgments concerning Jesus as a historical figure.

A. The basic method is to place greatest reliance on lines of converging evidence; that is, where the ancient witnesses converge on facts despite their disparate interpretations, we are on more solid ground. (Such sources include non-Christian sources, such as Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Lucian, as well as Jewish sources, such as Josephus.)

B. The result is a picture of broad patterns that falls far short of the "historical Jesus" purveyed by the popular press but has the advantage of being solidly based on the evidence.

C. Speaking of "Jesus's religious experience" is even more difficult and requires a dependence on the narrative portrayal of the Gospels (their interpretation) that goes beyond, but does not contradict, the historical evidence.

IV. Some features in the Gospel portrayals of Jesus point to a distinctive religious character.

A. Jesus clearly had some sense of a call as prophet or messiah that involved a mission to his fellow Jews.

B. Jesus had a highly developed sense of personal relationship with God as "son" that went beyond membership in God's people.

C. Jesus claimed and enacted an extraordinary freedom and authority that expressed itself in acts of healing, in teaching, and in the transgression of religious norms (e.g., to eat with sinners, break the Sabbath, break dietary laws, and so on).

D. Jesus's obedience to God was expressed in a radical lifestyle that combined itineracy, poverty, and celibacy.

E. The Gospel reports of Jesus's teaching and of his actions agree that his message and mission expressed a vision of God characterized by mercy and compassion.

F. His manner of death raises the intriguing question about his messianic consciousness.

Essential Reading:

P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf [Random House], 1999).

J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994).

Questions to Consider:

1. How do the literary complexities of the sources make a straightforward historical reconstruction of Jesus difficult?

2. What different view of the Gospels results from changing one's perspective on them from poor biographies to good witnesses and interpretations?

Lecture Twelve
The Resurrection Experience

Scope: In what sense is Jesus the "founder" of Christianity? A comparison to the founders of Buddhism and Islam sharpens the distinctiveness of Christian origins. It is not so much "Jesus's experience" that begins this religion as his followers' claim to "an experience of Jesus" after his death. The character of this experience can be approached through the claims the first Christians made about themselves, all of which involve the experience of a personal, transcendent, transforming power. The source of that power is said to be a human being executed by state authority. What is meant, exactly, by the statement that Jesus is risen from the dead? A review of false options leads to the paradoxical confession and experience that lies at the heart of the Christian religion.

Outline

I. In what sense is Jesus the "founder" of Christianity?

- **A.** A comparison with Moses, Muhammad, and the Buddha makes clear that Jesus is not the founder of Christianity in the same sense that they are the founders of Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.
- **B.** Christianity is born, not as a direct result of Jesus's teachings or actions, but as a result of what God is claimed to have done through his death and resurrection.
  - **1.** A "Jesus" movement during his lifetime was, at best, disorganized.
  - **2.** Jesus died without the presence of his disciples.
  - **3.** Jesus's teachings are not orderly or systematic and seem to have a kind of paradoxical or parabolic character.
  - **4.** The struggles of Christians over the centuries to establish a way of life based on the teachings of Jesus are notorious.
  - **5.** The chronological beginning of Christianity is the experience of the Resurrection.
  - **6.** The Resurrection experience = the encounter of Jesus's followers with Jesus after his death.

7. Some scholars are reluctant to acknowledge the validity of religious experience in general, much less the religious experience that was the beginning of Christianity.
8. But if it is difficult to account for the rise of a world religion (e.g., Buddhism and Islam) without assuming the authenticity of a religious experience, it is even more so in the case of Christianity.

II. This pivotal experience can be approached indirectly through an analysis of the religious claims of the earliest Christians, drawn from the earliest letters written to communities.

A. The compositions are read phenomenologically, not in terms of their own specific interests, but in terms of what they reveal about the experiences and convictions shared by their writers and readers.

B. The first Christians made claims about their significance that are out of proportion to their actual situation in the world, and these claims to their importance were based on other claims concerning their current personal experience: They were saved, they were transformed, they were empowered.

C. The claim to the experience of power is connected to a central symbol and a basic conviction.

1. The central symbol is that of the Holy Spirit: They were touched by a personal, transcendent, transforming energy that came from God, not from themselves.
2. The basic conviction is that "Jesus is Lord": The power touching them comes from a man who had died by state execution but now shares the life of God and communicates that life to others.

III. The central claim and experience of Christianity is so provocative and paradoxical that it requires close explication.

A. It is necessary to distinguish what the earliest writings claim from what they do not claim but are sometimes thought to be claiming: that Jesus did not really die (i.e., in the Qu'ran and some Gnostic gospels, Jesus goes directly to God, without dying first); that he lived on "spiritually" in his words or in the memory of his followers; that his followers had a deep insight into his identity;

that he was resuscitated (in the ancient and modern world there are many stories of people who have been resuscitated).

B. What the earliest writings claim is that the Resurrection experience involves the present as well as the past, involves Jesus's followers as well as himself, and is less a historical happening than an eschatological event.

1. Jesus does not "come back to life" but becomes the source of life: the "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

2. Jesus does not resume his empirical existence but shares fully in the life of God as "Lord."

C. A further important distinction is between these convictions, which pervade all the earliest literature, and the specific traditions concerning the "event" of the Resurrection: lists of witnesses, empty-tomb stories, and appearance accounts.

1. These accounts testify to the reality of the Resurrection and communicate some of its dimensions: bodily transformation, spiritual access, presence among believers.

2. Such accounts neither give rise to the experience and conviction nor fully interpret them.

IV. The Resurrection experience accounts for the power and paradoxical character of early Christianity.

A. The claim that an executed criminal was the source of ultimate power and life for all humans is both attractive and outrageous.

B. The nature of this claim accounts for distinctive features of earliest Christianity: its sense of immediacy and newness, its reconfiguration of sacred space and time, its focus on transforming power, its need to come to grips with the human Jesus, and its difficult translation into consistent moral teaching.

Essential Reading:

1 Corinthians 12–15; Gospel of Luke 24.

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 93–122.

Supplementary Reading:

T. Lorenzen, *The Resurrection and Discipleship: Interpretive Models, Biblical Reflection, Theological Consequences* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1995), 1–111.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do interpretations of the Resurrection in terms of a psychological awakening or a resuscitation fail to account for the birth of this religion?
2. Given a strong understanding of the Resurrection—Jesus sharing in the life of God and becoming life-giving Spirit—what problems are generated for understanding the manner of Jesus's life and death?

Lecture Thirteen
Movement Meets World—Five Key Transitions

Scope: Christianity's rapid spread across the Mediterranean world in the first generation of its existence remains one of history's remarkable success stories. The spread of communities is all the more impressive when the circumstances of this expansion are considered. Christianity had to accomplish five major transitions immediately: geographical, linguistic, cultural, sociological, and demographic. The wonder is not that it is diverse from the beginning, but that it had any coherence at all. The Acts of the Apostles provides a narrative framework for Christianity's emergence in the world of Jewish and Greco-Roman culture. It has its limitations but remains a valuable historical source, not least because it shows the role played by some of the religious phenomena that we will consider in the following presentations: baptism, fellowship meals, healings, speaking in tongues, visions, and prayer.

Outline

I. Christianity spread across the Mediterranean world with remarkable speed, planting communities (*ekklesia* = assembly = church) from Jerusalem through Asia Minor and into Europe, within twenty-five years.

A. Our primary source for this first expansion is the second volume of Luke's Gospel, called the Acts of the Apostles (ca. 85), which must be supplemented by information provided by epistolary literature of the first generation, especially Paul's letters. Acts is our only narrative account of Christian beginnings.

1. Acts is a limited source, failing to tell us much of interest, selective in its focus and use of materials, and with a definite theological bias. For example, Luke disposes of six years of Paul's career in three lines; he does not tell us how Christians got to Rome.

2. Acts resembles ancient history in that it contains some fact and some fiction.

3. Acts tells only of the westward expansion of Christianity and of Christianity in cities, rather than in rural areas.
4. It is nevertheless of unparalleled importance for giving us some of the facts about Christianity's early years (the most important of which are confirmed by other sources), as well as insight into features of its life.

B. Christianity's geographical expansion is all the more remarkable in light of two considerations.

1. Its success was not dependent on military or diplomatic power but on the persuasive speech of wandering preachers (apostles) that took place in the open forum and in households and whose only demonstrations of power took the form of healing.
2. The expansion took place under conditions of duress: local harassment and persecution, the death of leaders, the lack of a strong or controlling center.

II. The Acts of the Apostles and other early literature show the consequences of such rapid and uncontrolled expansion.

A. The movement enjoyed no long period of stabilization during which traditions could be collected and teachings, organized. It was required to negotiate five major transitions from the beginning and throughout the first generations.

1. Geographically, the movement traveled from a Palestinian base to the Diaspora, and after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the Jerusalem church disappeared.
2. Sociologically, it moved from an itinerant, rural phenomenon (the Jesus movement) to an urban cult located in households.
3. Linguistically, it moved from the Aramaic of Palestine (and, possibly, the speech of Jesus) to the *koine* Greek of the Hellenistic world; all the writings of the New Testament are in Greek.
4. Culturally, it moved from being a sect within Palestinian Judaism to an assembly within the dominant Greco-Roman culture.
5. Demographically, it increasingly succeeded among Gentiles rather than Jews, so that by 70, the majority of Christians were already Gentile in background.

B. Given that all these transitions took place from the start and were accompanied by the conditions of stress already enumerated, Christianity was literally a new thing in each place it appeared.

1. The diversity found in early Christian literature—a diversity not only of genre but also of theme and perspective—is grounded in the diversity of early Christian communities.

2. Christianity began in diversity. Given the conditions of its birth and growth, diversity is less a surprise than the existence of any unity to the movement.

III. The Acts of the Apostles shows both the transcendent and the all-too-immanent aspects of the early Christian movement.

A. It enumerates the kinds of religious rituals and expressions with patterns that point to the experience of power. These will become the subject of our subsequent analysis:

1. Baptism is a ritual of initiation that is associated with the "gift of the Holy Spirit" and marks entry into the community of believers (Acts 2:38–41; 8:12–17; 10:47–48; 19:5–6).

2. Speaking in tongues ("glossolalia") is a sign of possession by the Holy Spirit and of prophecy (2:1–13; 10:44–46; 19:6).

3. Common meals express unity in the Spirit and the presence of the risen Lord (1:4; 2:46; 10:41; 20:7–12; 27:35).

4. Healing is a demonstration of divine power and a restoration of human community (3:1–7; 5:12–16; 8:4–7; 14:8–13; 27:7–10).

5. Prayer and visions give access to divine power (1:24–26; 4:23–31; 7:54–60; 9:1–19; 10:1–16; 13:1–3; 16:9–10; 18:9–11; 21:10–11; 22:17–18; 27:23–25).

B. It also sketches the human struggles that accompanied the movement's first expansion: conflicts between parties in the church, between leaders, between different ideological positions, and between members of this movement and, on one side, members of the Jewish tradition who did not accept Jesus as Messiah and, on the other side, Gentiles who found this new teaching and practice ridiculous.

Essential Reading:

The Acts of the Apostles.

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 125–153.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are the implications of the thesis that Christianity in the beginning was diverse rather than uniform?
2. How does the Acts of the Apostles successfully show not only divine but also human dimensions of Christianity's first expansion across the Mediterranean world?

Erratum: it was Peter and John who healed the lame man at the temple, not Peter and Barnabas.

Lecture Fourteen
Ritual Imprinting and Politics of Perfection

Scope: Baptism is early Christianity's ritual of initiation, the most widely attested cultic act of the primitive community. Although its antecedents and precise mode of performance are uncertain, the symbolism connected to the ritual enables some appreciation of its significance. As a ritual of initiation, baptism can usefully be compared to other such rituals both in ancient Greco-Roman and other cultural systems. Such comparison provides perspective on the religious issues raised by the conflict reported in two of Paul's letters (Galatians and Colossians) between the apostle and members of communities who sought circumcision in addition to baptism. Understanding the function of multiple initiations cross-culturally, we can better appreciate the religious zeal of the circumcizers and the difficult task faced by Paul's insistence on the adequacy of baptism alone.

Outline

I. A reminder concerning our premise and method: By examining specific patterns of behavior, we approach the meaning of religious experience.

- **A.** If religion is the organization of life around that which is perceived to be ultimate power, then it should be possible to move from the outside in, from the pattern of organization to the organizing experience of power.
- **B.** Particularly when dealing with ancient writings, which have an interest in other than a full description of religious behavior—rather, assuming it and arguing about it—such investigation must proceed cautiously, using comparative materials from other cultures when appropriate.

II. In earliest Christianity, Baptism (i.e., the public baptism of adults) is the most visible and widely attested ritual practice, and because it also becomes the matter for dispute, we are able both to suggest the pattern of behavior involved and some of its experiential meaning.

A. Although not assuming an absolute uniformity of practice, the evidence drawn from the letters and Gospels and Acts suggests some sense of the ritual.

B. The extant evidence also points to several levels of symbolism connected to the ritual: purification/forgiveness of sins, new life/resurrection, relationship to God.

C. As a ritual of initiation, baptism serves to provide status enhancement through participation in the benefits of the cult.

III. A debate over the number of initiations that Christians ought to undergo leads to a better understanding of the religious experience of some early members of the community.

A. The controversy is found in Paul's letters to the Galatians and Colossians: We hear of Gentile believers who seek circumcision as a further initiation, claiming thereby a higher degree of perfection.

B. The question arises concerning the religious perceptions and motivations behind the undergoing of such a painful operation; the answer is to be found in the religious expectations (or "imprinting") among Gentile converts.

1. In the world of the mystery religions, initiations would have been multiple, each of them leading to higher status.

2. Likewise, those initiated into Christ through baptism would have expected a painful second initiation into Moses (and, therefore, the Jewish people).

C. Multiple lines of evidence reveal how "religiously logical" such an imprinting would be.

1. Initiation into Greco-Roman mysteries was always multiple.

2. Philo shows us that, at least at the level of metaphor, his understanding of Judaism as a "mystery" also involved multiple initiations.

3. Study of initiation rituals cross-culturally shows that multiple initiations are the norm.

4. Jewish and early Christian practice might also have contributed to such an expectation.

IV. Paul's response to the controversy shows another set of religious understandings attached to the ritual of baptism.

A. Paul sees the desire for "more" to be a challenge to the adequacy of the experience of God through Christ.

B. He is concerned about the implications of multiple initiations (especially when available only to males) for the egalitarian character of the community.

C. He perceives maturity and perfection, not in ritual terms, but in cognitive and moral terms.

V. The denouement of the controversy shows how religious instincts can triumph over theology.

A. Paul's position held, as Christians maintained a single ritual of initiation and rejected circumcision.

B. But within centuries, Christians developed their own "multiple initiations" through confirmation and ordination.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 69–103.

Paul's Letter to the Galatians and Letter to the Colossians.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the struggle over degrees of initiation illustrate the distinction between religion and theology, and how in this case can religion be said to "trump" theology?
2. How does the use of cross-cultural analysis provide insight into the religious dimensions of early Christianity that a reading of the New Testament writings alone cannot give?

Lecture Fifteen

Glossolalia and the Embarrassments of Experience

Scope: Forms of ecstatic speech are found in ancient Hebrew prophecy and in Greco-Roman mantic prophecy. It is not shocking to find glossolalia also as a manifestation of spiritual possession in earliest Christianity. More difficult to answer is why such a powerful expression of the Holy Spirit's presence should be so sporadically attested and so quickly marginalized in Christianity. Once more, the use of cross-cultural linguistic and anthropological studies helps define the phenomenon in terms of personal experience and social function. Analysis of Paul's careful discussion of glossolalia in his first letter to the Corinthians reveals the conscious motivations at work in its demotion and suggests some other factors at work, such as the common connection between ecstatic utterance and the subversive power of women.

Outline

I. Glossolalia, or "speaking in tongues," has always been a powerful and divisive form of religious experience in Christianity, both in the beginning—it divided the crowd at Pentecost (Acts 2:12–13)—and in many churches today.

A. Champions of the practice regard it as the most direct sign of the power of the Holy Spirit and the prophetic voice of the church. In charismatic or Pentecostal movements within Christianity, "tongues" is the defining experience.

B. Many other Christians, while acknowledging that glossolalia is found in the New Testament, regard it as something of an embarrassment. They see in the practice a potential for self-delusion or even deception.

II. Even the definition of the phenomenon gives rise to disagreement concerning appropriate methods of analysis.

A. What New Testament sources should be used and how should they be read? Do the narrative allusions in Mark and Acts point to the same phenomenon as Paul's discussion does in 1 Corinthians 12–14? Do their quite different descriptions suggest different

experiences or only different interpretations of the same experience?

B. How much should cross-cultural evidence affect the interpretation of the early Christian practice? Some form of ecstatic utterance is associated with ancient Hebrew prophets, and mantic prophecy is well attested and highly esteemed in Greek religion. Do these shed light on the Christian phenomenon or should they be excluded?

C. The hardest question concerns contemporary practice: Modern-day Pentecostals claim that their experience and practice is the same as that reported in the New Testament. Should these claims affect analysis?

III. Two standard definitions of speaking in tongues divide practitioners and analysts.

A. In Pentecostal groups, tongues is considered to be speech in real but unknown languages (xenoglossia) that is given by divine inspiration. The evidence in Mark and Acts, together with some lines in 1 Corinthians 14 support this view, but it is mostly based on anecdotal contemporary evidence.

B. Linguists and students of religious phenomenology define glossolalia as an ecstatic utterance, a form of ordered babbling. This reading takes more account of the rest of the evidence in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and contemporary studies of cross-cultural glossolalic practice.

C. The evidence best supports the position that glossolalia is not the speaking of a foreign language unknown to the speaker but a form of ecstatic babbling.

1. Psychologically and sociologically, tongues is both a learned behavior and an expression of spiritual joy and release.

2. Religiously, the power to praise and prophesy in this fashion is attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The two main sources for the practice of glossolalia in earliest Christianity agree on some aspects of it but interpret it differently.

A. Both Acts and Paul agree that glossolalia is a “more-than-human” form of speech that is empowered by the Holy Spirit, is associated with prophecy, and connotes the presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the community.

B. Acts has a straightforward and positive evaluation of tongues as a form of prophecy. The ecstatic speech at Pentecost is the decisive sign that the Spirit has been poured out on the followers of Jesus following his Resurrection.

C. Paul has a much more ambivalent attitude toward glossolalia, despite himself being a practitioner.

1. He allows its expression in the assembly but only when the speech can be "interpreted" and, thus, made intelligible to the community.

2. He much prefers what he calls "prophecy," which is a non-ecstatic form of speech that "builds up" the community through rational discourse.

V. Paul's cautious attitude toward glossolalia predicts its ambiguous continuing role in Christianity.

A. Positively, speaking in tongues clearly was a powerful religious experience. For the individual, it was a literal "empowerment" and "experience of the divine"; for the community, it was empirical evidence for the presence of the Holy Spirit of prophecy.

B. Negatively, we learn that ecstatic utterance could be confused with pagan forms of prophecy, that it could be used divisively in support of spiritual elitism, and that it could be disruptive.

C. Cross-cultural studies indicate that ecstatic speech sometimes functions subversively to undermine male authority structures. The practice of "prophecy" by Corinthian women prophets may have been perceived as such a threat.

D. Despite its obvious power and appeal, glossolalia quickly becomes marginal in Christianity, associated with primitive times and deviant "enthusiast" groups. For the same reason, it also is a frequent feature of reform and revitalization movements in Christianity.

Essential Reading:

The Acts of the Apostles 2:1–13; 1 Corinthians 12–14.

L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 105–136.

Supplementary Reading:

M. T. Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues: An Experiment in Religious Experience* (London: Epworth Press, 1964).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why should the most powerful and palpable manifestation of divine power so quickly disappear from earliest Christianity?
2. How does gender analysis enrich our perception of the factors at work in the marginalization of glossolalia in Christianity?

Lecture Sixteen
Meals Are Where the Magic Is

Scope: Like other ancient and modern religious groups, early Christians shared fellowship meals. Evidence from Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures testifies to the peculiar power experienced by participants in meals. The cultural contexts, however, offer a number of possible antecedents to Christian practice. What, then, was the precise meaning of the Christian meal? One scholarly view proposes that it was a memorial for the dead rather than a celebration of participation with the risen Christ. The topic raises the question of the appropriate way to interpret archaeological and literary evidence, the issue of unity and diversity in early Christianity, and the character of the Christian movement as based in the Resurrection experience.

Outline

I. Like other ancient groups, the first Christians shared meals that had special significance; this practice also presents special problems for analysis.

- **A.** The basic problem is determining the precise religious significance of meals.
  - **1.** Meals are a part of everyday life, unlike baptism (a once-for-all ritual) and glossolalia (a powerful individual experience).
  - **2.** Meals can have so many kinds and levels of significance that determining the exact meaning attached to a meal by a specific group in antiquity is difficult.
- **B.** The subject of meals is a case study for the application of different perspectives and methods to the analysis of earliest Christianity: the theologically interested historical approach, the reductionistic and revisionist historical approach, and the phenomenological approach.

II. The evidence concerning Christian meals is extensive both in canonical and non-canonical sources.

- **A.** The Gospel narratives contain several kinds of meal scenes (the feeding stories, the Last Supper, meals with followers after the

Resurrection) that reflect the perceptions of the believing community (e.g., Mark 6:35–44; 14:12–25; Luke 24:13–49).

B. The Acts of the Apostles and the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles refer to common meals frequently (Acts 2:42, 46; Acts of John 84, 108; Acts of Thomas 27, 50), as do other 2nd-century writings (*The Didache*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Letters of Ignatius*, *Justin*, *Apology I*).

C. Paul touches on issues pertaining to meals in several passages of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:6–8; 10:14–22; 11:17–34).

1. Paul emphasizes the need for Christians to avoid sharing meals with unbelievers or immoral people.

2. He connects the meal with the Passover of Jesus ("Christ, Our Passover has been sacrificed").

3. He is deeply concerned that Corinthian community members do not eat meat that has been offered as a sacrifice to idols. He does not want Christians to attend pagan shrines or eat meals at pagan events, which he calls "the table of demons."

4. He rebukes the fortunate for despising the poor at Christian celebratory meals (that Paul calls "the Lord's Supper").

III. The study of early Christian meals in the classic historical paradigm is concerned with origins and development.

A. Attention is given almost exclusively to "the Eucharist," its history, its connections with the historical Jesus, and its links to meals in Judaism and Greco-Roman culture.

1. The classic study of Hans Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper*, traces the developed liturgies of the 4th and 5th centuries back to the New Testament.

2. Lietzmann hypothesizes two primitive meals: a simple fellowship meal shared by Jesus and his followers and "the Lord's Supper" in memory of Jesus's death.

B. This approach reveals anxieties of a theological character: Do the developed liturgies really derive from Jesus, and if there are similarities to Greco-Roman or Jewish fellowship meals, does this detract from Christianity's uniqueness?

IV. The study of early Christian meals in the revisionist paradigm, in contrast, reduces the Christian meal to its surrounding environment.

A. J. Z. Smith's *Drudgery Divine* suggests that a strict comparison between Christian meals and those of the Greco-Roman world eliminates any distinctive dimension to the Christian meals.

B. Relying on two popular presuppositions, Smith seeks first to dissolve the Christian practice and second to eliminate a distinctive Christian symbolism.

1. The first presupposition is that Christianity was so diverse in the beginning that it had no unity of experience, conviction, or practice.

2. The second presupposition is that archaeological evidence from the 3rd and 4th centuries should be interpreted apart from Christian literary evidence and read within the code of Greco-Roman culture.

C. In this interpretation, Christian fellowship meals are a version of the widespread practice of meals in memory of the dead.

V. A phenomenological approach to the evidence yields a different interpretation of early Christian meals.

A. Although recognizing diversity in earliest Christianity, this approach does not ignore equally strong evidence suggesting communication and cooperation in the first generations.

B. It insists that archaeological evidence must be read together with literary evidence, especially because, in the case of Christianity, the literary precedes the archaeological by two hundred years.

C. When all the literary and artistic evidence is read together, the overwhelming weight of the evidence suggests that Christian meals were not in memory of a dead person but a celebration of the presence of the powerful resurrected Lord Jesus.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 137–179.

Supplementary Reading:

H. Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy*, trans. D. H. G. Reave, with introduction and further inquiry by R. D. Richardson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979).

J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 116–143.

Questions to Consider:

1. What distinguishes a phenomenological approach to early Christian meals from the two versions of the historical approach described in this lecture?
2. What is at stake, religiously, in deciding that Christian fellowship meals are a memorial for the dead or a celebration of a living presence?

Lecture Seventeen
Healing and Salvation

Scope: Healing the sick is a manifestation of divine power in both Greco-Roman and Jewish religious traditions. Physical healing and exorcism are major components of Jesus's ministry in the Gospels and play a large role in the Acts of the Apostles (both canonical and apocryphal). The letters of Paul and James attest that a healing ministry continued in established Christian communities. As a visible sign of divine presence, healing tends to validate the healer as a divine agent and the movement the healer represented. Because healing can be faked, it is a controverted sign of divine power; because healing can bear several meanings, it is also an ambiguous experience of the divine. In early Christianity, healing is associated with five distinct motifs. They are a sign of divine presence, of the healer's compassion, of stages of spiritual transformation, of restoration to community, and of faith.

Outline

I. Healing the sick in body and mind is a manifestation of divine power in both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions and is found in earliest and later Christianity.

- **A.** Greco-Roman religion knew both of healing shrines and of individuals whose healing power certified them as "divine men" (see Apollonius of Tyana).
- **B.** Judaism's ancient traditions of prophetic healers continued to live among certain rabbinic teachers (see Elijah, Chanina ben Dosa).
- **C.** In Christianity, healing has, like speaking in tongues, been both a powerful and a polarizing phenomenon.
  - **1.** Some Christians virtually identify the good news with healing, making it the sign of authentic religion.
  - **2.** Others are suspicious of healing, both because of its long tradition of fakery and because of its theological implications.

II. Evidence for the practice of healing in Christianity is widespread and prominent.

A. In each of the canonical Gospels, Jesus is portrayed as the healer of physical illness—especially of the sort that separated people from community—and of mental or spiritual alienation (exorcisms).

B. The Acts of the Apostles attributes the power to heal to the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 3:1–7; 5:12–16), to Philip (8:4–7), to Peter (9:32–43), and to Paul (14:6–10; 16:18). The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles makes healing by the apostles a constant feature of their ministry.

C. In addition to the charge that Jesus was a magician who practiced black magic, the apostles also seemed to practice necromancy, a form of black magic in antiquity, in which the spirit of a dead person (especially a criminal) would be invoked in order to accomplish something negative. The apostles would heal with the words "in the name of Jesus" and, in the eyes of the ancients, this practice could easily be understood as necromancy.

D. The incidental comments in the letters of Paul (1 Cor. 12:28–30; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5) and James (5:13–17) support the picture of healing as a practice in the earliest communities.

III. The meaning of healing as a religious experience in early Christianity must be derived from the interpretation given it by literary sources.

A. We lack what most we would want as analysts of religious experience, namely firsthand testimony to the process of healing. The sources provide only indirect testimony to the feelings of those who are healed (see, e.g., Mark 9:21–24; 10:51; John 5:7; 9:25; Acts 3:1–9).

B. Five distinct (though sometimes overlapping) meanings are associated with healing in the early Christian writings:

1. Healing is a sign of God's powerful presence in the world and, therefore, serves to validate the agency of the healer as a divine messenger. This is a constant in the Gospels and Acts (especially the Apocryphal Acts) but also in Paul's letters.

2. Healing symbolizes the compassion of the healer, above all the compassion of Jesus, which points to the mercy of God toward humans.

3. Healing can signify stages of transformation for discipleship, an empowerment that enables humans to overcome

impediments to God's service. Paul's healing from blindness in his conversion is the obvious example.

4. Healing symbolized the restoration of the sick to community and, by extension, the healing or restoration of the community itself. Here, we see the link between "healing" and "saving" (both using the Greek verb *sozein*), both in the Gospel and in the Letter of James.
5. Healing symbolizes faith, in God, in the healer, perhaps even in the possibility of transformation.

IV. With all its ambiguity, healing has remained one of Christianity's continuing claims on the experiential, above all on the power of the Resurrection.

A. Healing "in the name of Jesus" was, in the earliest period, testimony that the Resurrection of Jesus invoked by Christians was real, present, and powerful.

B. Throughout the history of Christianity, manifestations of healing power have certified the healer as a "saint," that is, as one whose life embodies the presence of the resurrected one.

Essential Reading:

The Acts of the Apostles 3:1–17; Letter of James 5:13–18.

Supplementary Reading:

H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic in New Testament Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. In the Greek New Testament, the terms for "healing" and "salvation" are the same (*sozein*); what are the consequences of equating the two realities?
2. Why have miracles of healing always been one of the major proofs for the truth of Christianity? What does this say about the character of this religion?

Lecture Eighteen
Access to Power—Visions and Prayer

Scope: In all ancient religions, visions (and auditions) and prayer represent the two-way traffic between humans and the divine. Prayer is the enacted conviction that there is a power greater than the human at work in the world, access to which can be attained through human effort. Visions (and auditions) are the immediate experience of that greater power and, when reported to others through writing, offer testimony to a larger reality than that of the empirical world. The prayer of Jesus and his followers offers clues to their perception of that larger reality. The reported visions of Jesus, Stephen, Peter, Paul, and John provide glimpses to others of what they experienced.

Outline

I. Visions and prayer are modes of the mystical dimension of religion in which individuals seek or receive an unmediated experience of the divine power.

- **A.** Prayer can be both communal and individual, whereas visions (and auditions) are most often (though not exclusively) individual.
- **B.** Both modes point to the conviction that human existence is defined by transcendent power as much as by empirical facts. Prayer is the embodied expression of openness to that reality; visions are the experiences that confirm its truth. Visions communicated offer a share in the experience to others.
- **C.** Both prayer and visions are attested in the Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions.
  1. A sample of Jewish prayer is 2 *Baruch* 21:19–26, and a sample of Greco-Roman prayer is the *Hymn to Zeus* of Cleanthes.
  2. An example of a Jewish vision experience is *I Enoch* 13:7–10, and an example of a Greco-Roman vision experience is the vision of Scipio (Cicero, *The Republic*, VI, 9).

D. As these examples indicate, analysis of the content of prayer and visions yields insight into the experience and conviction distinctive to a religious tradition.

II. A survey of prayer in the writings of the New Testament reveals several distinctive features of the Christian experience of the divine power.

A. In the Gospels, Jesus is portrayed as a person of prayer. The theme is particularly developed by Luke (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1; 22:41, 44–45; 23:46).

1. Jesus teaches his disciples the prayer that becomes known as the "Lord's Prayer," or "Our Father" (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4).

2. The attitudes of the Lord's Prayer are exemplified in Jesus's own prayer before his arrest (Mark 14:36 and parallels).

B. In the other New Testament literature, prayer continues to be addressed to God but often is offered "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (see Rom. 16:25–27) or is addressed to Jesus himself as risen Lord (2 Pet. 3:18).

C. The Acts of the Apostles provides narrative expression of the (sometimes implicit) assumption that prayer is a mode of access to divine power (see Acts 4:23–31; 16:25–36). An explicit statement of the connection is found in James 5:16–18.

III. More than is sometimes recognized, the New Testament is a literature filled with accounts of visions and auditions.

A. Although thoroughly a person of action, Jesus is portrayed as a person of prayer (see above) and as one who himself is a visionary. The conviction is implicit in his ability to predict the future (see Mark 13 and parallels) and is given narrative expression in the accounts of his baptism (Mark 1:9–11) and temptation (Matt. 4:1–11).

B. The conviction that Jesus is the risen one is expressed in the account of the martyrdom of Stephen, who at his death sees Jesus at God's right hand (Acts 7:54–60).

C. The experience of vision as a revelation of realities not fully understood is found in Peter's ambiguous vision of clean and unclean foods in Acts 10:9–16.

D. Paul's vision of the resurrected Jesus is the basis of his own call (see 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Acts reports the vision three times (9:1–9; 22:4–16; 26:9–18), and Paul may allude to the actual experience in 2 Corinthians 12:1–5.

E. The most extravagant vision offered by the New Testament is that of the Seer John on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9–11), whose book reports a series of prophetic auditions from the risen Jesus (Rev. 2–3) and a powerful vision of God's triumph over evil through the risen Jesus (Rev. 4–22).

IV. Mystical prayer and the experience of visions continue to be part of religious experience in Christianity.

A. In orthodox circles, the context and content of such experiences reinforces the received tradition (in the 2nd century, see, for example, *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*).

B. Prayer and visions can also become the instruments of subversion and challenge to received traditions, providing alternative claims to authority based on experience (in the 2nd century, see, for example, Montanist and Gnostic literature).

Essential Reading:

2 Corinthians 12:1–5

The Acts of the Apostles 7:54–60

The Book of Revelation 1–4.

Supplementary Reading:

O. Cullmann, *Prayer in the New Testament*, trans J. Bowden (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

M. T. Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why are visions among the most authoritative yet also the most suspect of religious experiences?

2. How do the passages cited from the New Testament demonstrate the tension between prayer as a receptivity to divine power and prayer as petition for divine power?

Lecture Nineteen
The Holy Community

Scope: From the beginning, Christianity was social in character. It took the form of an organized community called the church (*ekklesia*). The church was an intentional community that shared some structural features with the Jewish synagogue and the Hellenistic household. A major challenge to the new religion was establishing and maintaining its boundaries. It needed to signal its distinctive character in contrast both to Greco-Roman clubs and religious associations and to Jewish synagogues. Despite the diversity in the Christian movement in the first generations, a fellowship was maintained among communities on the basis of a network of leaders, communication through letters, a sharing of possessions, and a broad agreement concerning basic beliefs and moral standards. Metaphors for the church (God's Temple, Household of God, Body of Christ) indicate some dimensions of early Christian self-understanding.

Outline

I. The most obvious and visible way religious experience organizes life around itself is in the formation of a community: Christianity was a social movement from the beginning.

- **A.** The earliest evidence suggests that the expansion of Christianity in the first generation took place less by the conversion of individuals than by the formation of "churches" (*ekklesia*) that gathered in "households" (*oikos*).
- **B.** The first Christian communities shared certain characteristics with other groups in the environment.
  - **1.** The Hellenistic household provided relational language (in a sort of fictive kinship—early Christians called one another "brother" and "sister"), a pattern of ethics ("tables" of household ethics), and a rich set of metaphors.
  - **2.** The Greco-Roman club and cult contributed the basic pattern of administration through a board of elders.

3. The Hellenistic synagogue shared the pattern of administration and contributed the basic set of activities: engaging in worship, teaching, settling disputes, and supporting the needy.

C. These structural dimensions were often in tension with other more radical aspects of Christian experience.

1. The patriarchal structure of society was threatened by the ideal of egalitarianism: In Christ, there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free (Gal. 3:28).
2. The conventional patterns of authority were challenged by charismatic leadership based on divine call (apostles, prophets) or religious experience (visions, tongues).
3. The stability of institutions was placed in question by eschatological convictions ("the frame of this world is passing away").

D. A major challenge to early Christian communities was establishing clear boundaries between themselves and other groups.

1. A clear distance is established between the church ("the saints") and the perceived immorality of Greco-Roman culture. Aspects of Greek philosophy are adopted, but Greco-Roman religion is demonized.
2. The distinction from Judaism is made by the rejection of circumcision and the observance of ritual laws, while continuity is established through the maintenance of Jewish religious convictions (Torah) and moral standards (the Decalogue).

II. Although Christian communities were spread across a vast territory and developed in relative independence—thus, the diversity in the New Testament literature—they also maintained an implicit fellowship (*koinonia*) through a variety of means.

A. The New Testament literature itself shows how rapidly the movement expressed itself in writing and developed a literary interdependence.

B. Despite some conflicts among leaders, the movement also manifested a fellowship of personal cooperation and communication.

1. A complex network of personal communication was established very early, as indicated in lists of names in various letters.

2. Further evidence of communication between Christian leaders is found in the early and crucial decision to allow Gentiles into the community without circumcision—the most important and decisive decision made in Christian history. This decision was made at a conference in Jerusalem that took place around 49.

C. Communities established and maintained ties of fellowship through the sharing of material possessions. The outstanding example is the collection that Paul took up for the church in Jerusalem.

D. The New Testament writings are diverse in genre, theme, and perspective, but they also share a common set of religious convictions (e.g., there is one Lord Jesus Christ) and moral standards (the Ten Commandments and the law of love).

III. Four metaphors used of the church in the New Testament writings point to different dimensions of its self-understanding.

A. The metaphor of "the people of God" (Acts 15:4; Rom. 9:25; 1 Cor. 10:7; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 13:12; 1 Pet. 2:9–10; Rev. 18:4; 21:3) on one side stresses continuity with Judaism, but on the other makes an exclusive claim to embody "the people."

B. The metaphor of "the household of God" also reapplies the ancient title of "Household of Israel/Jacob" (Acts 2:36; 7:42) and echoes the link to the social structure of the Hellenistic household (see 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:3, 6; 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:1).

C. The metaphor of "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:9, 16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 5:1; 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 4:12; Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 21:22) again appropriates a central symbol of Judaism for the community itself—as did the Qumran community—with a special emphasis on the presence of God (through the Holy Spirit).

D. The metaphor of "the Body of Christ" is exclusively Pauline (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 6:15; 10:16–17; 12:12–27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4–16; Col. 1:18, 24) and stresses the presence, through the Holy Spirit, of the risen Christ within the community as the source of its life.

Supplementary Reading:

R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

Questions to Consider:

1. What distinctive problems did earliest Christianity face in trying to establish its communal identity in contrast to Judaism and Greco-Roman religions?
2. How does the metaphor of the "Body of Christ" point to a strong understanding of the Resurrection in Paul's churches?

Lecture Twenty
The Community's Worship

Scope: One of the most important ways in which religion organizes existence is through ritual activity that establishes (or reveals) sacred time and space. Ritual activity in the earliest stage of Christianity was relatively simple: Sacred space was nonexistent; sacred time was simply the "Lord's Day." In the New Testament, we catch glimpses of baptism, Eucharist, kinship language, foot-washing, the holy kiss. Some worship gatherings gave opportunity for teaching, ecstatic speech, and prophecy. We are able to postulate activities of reading and teaching in the community. The *Didache* shows an early 2nd-century form of worship. Liturgy develops organically, with a strong influence exercised by Jewish synagogal worship. In the 4th century, Christian worship expands in response to the time and space allotted it by imperial favor and begins to create the elaborate sanctification of time known as the liturgical year and the sacramental system.

Outline

I. This lecture represents a transition in the course as we begin to trace the continuation of certain experiences and convictions through stages of development.

- **A.** As the community takes on greater definition, it increasingly becomes the main vehicle through which religious experience is mediated in its practices of worship, teaching, and ethics.
- **B.** A dominant way of understanding this transition is in terms of *loss* of the experiential (or "charismatic") in favor of institutionalization. This view of development as decline is a prime example of theological presuppositions distorting analysis.
- **C.** A more phenomenological approach recognizes that even in origins, there are elements of structure and that as forms of structure change, elements of experience remain alive and often powerful.

II. Worship in the New Testament is not fully described and is known mainly through allusion.

A. Earliest Christianity had little distinctive sense of sacred space and time—note the "transcendent" character of the primordial experience of the Resurrection.

1. Places of worship were in the beginning Jewish—the temple and synagogue—and shifted to the household; there were no public worship buildings before the 4th century.

2. Only the "Lord's Day" is set aside in New Testament writings (1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), and Passover may have been observed (1 Cor. 5:7).

B. The practice of worship involved various combinations of the following elements, although we are not able to reconstruct any order of worship.

1. Some elements were drawn from the worship of the synagogue: the reading of Scripture, study, singing of psalms and hymns, prayer, and preaching.

2. Some specific and distinctive Christian rituals include the use of kinship language (Christians called one another "brother" and "sister"), the fellowship kiss, washing of feet, and (as already learned), baptism and fellowship meals (Lord's Supper). The practice of ecstatic utterance (prophecy, glossolalia) probably occurred in the context of worship, as well.

C. These elements of practice are accompanied by certain convictions.

1. The community gathered "in the name of Jesus" embodies his presence in more than a simply metaphorical fashion.

2. The energy in the assembly that empowers both ordinary and extraordinary means of transformation is given by God through the Holy Spirit.

III. In the 2nd century, we have fragmentary glimpses of Christian worship as it develops in the time before Constantine.

A. Pliny the Younger's *Letter to Trajan* 10.5 (around the year 112) contains a short description of a Christian liturgy as perceived by a Roman governor who has gotten information through torture.

1. He learned that Christians assembled on a fixed day, prayed, and vowed not to commit crimes, not to break their word, and to share possessions. They met again to eat together.

2. The governor concluded that Christianity constituted nothing worse than a "perverse and extravagant superstition."

B. The Satirist Lucian of Samosata's *Proteus Peregrinus* 11 provides another outsider perception: Christians read books, believed in an afterlife, shared their possessions, were not afraid to die for their beliefs, and helped those in need.

C. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (14:2, 15:2) and the *Letters* of Ignatius of Antioch (*Smyrneans* 7:1–2; *Romans* 4:1–2) show the development of eucharistic imagery in connection with martyrdom.

D. The *Didache* 9–14 provides us with a late 1st-century or early 2nd-century instruction on worship, which resembled the sort of gathering with prayers and blessings that a leader in a Jewish household would conduct.

E. The *First Apology* 66–67 of Justin Martyr offers a report on a mid-2nd-century liturgy: On Sunday, sacred texts would be read; a sermon would be preached; the congregation would rise and pray, then participate in the Eucharist; and their leader would offer prayers.

IV. The dramatically changed conditions of imperial favor under Constantine begin the equally dramatic development of a Christian worship that becomes more elaborate and pervasive.

A. Sacred space enters Christianity in two visible ways:
1. Grand public buildings for worship allow for the expansion of worship both in duration and complexity.
2. A preoccupation with "the Holy Land" begins the traditions of specifically Christian pilgrimage.

B. Sacred time becomes a feature of Christianity in two complex ways:
1. The development of Christian feasts (Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost) creates a liturgical year that sacralizes time.
2. The development of a sacramental system (baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, reconciliation, ordination, marriage, anointing of the sick) sacralizes all the stages of life.

Supplementary Reading:

P. F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, trans. A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978).

J. A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1959).

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the characteristic practices of worship in the first generation express Christianity's primal experience of the crucified and raised Messiah?
2. What important changes in Christian consciousness were bound to occur when new political realities enabled the further development of "sacred space" and "sacred time"?

Lecture Twenty-One
The Transforming Word of Scripture

Scope: Because of the key role played by experience, Christianity has never been a "religion of the book" in the way that Judaism and Islam are. Christianity's relationship to Scripture has always involved a tension-filled dialectic. Its first "Scripture" was the Torah shared with Judaism, which Christians reinterpreted in light of the paradoxical experience of the crucified and raised Messiah, Jesus. Its own literary productions were composed at least in part on the basis of the appropriation and reinterpretation of Torah, and themselves became "Scripture" through the process of liturgical reading. The decisive moment in forming the Christian canon came in the mid-2nd century, when Gnostics promulgated an alternative version of Christianity based on an alternative set of sacred writings. The interpretation of the Christian Bible (as it now was) involved convictions concerning its inspiration, authority, harmony, and transforming power.

Outline

I. Christianity is not—and never has been—a "religion of the book" in the way of the other great Western religions.

- **A.** In Judaism and Islam, revelation is a matter of God (Allah) disclosing his will through speaking and that speech recorded in writing (Tanak, Qur'an) that becomes the basis of extensive systems of law (Talmud, Shariah).
- **B.** Christianity's fundamental moment of revelation is in the death and resurrection of a human person, Jesus of Nazareth, which is, at first, in direct conflict with the Scripture.
- **C.** Christianity's relationship to Scripture is from the beginning tension filled and dialectical.

II. The writing of the New Testament compositions itself attests to the experiential basis of the Christian religion.

- **A.** The first followers of Jesus—and Jesus himself—perceived reality in terms of the symbolic world of Torah.

B. As a "messiah" however, Jesus patently failed to meet the messianic expectations that Jews found in Torah.

1. Although messianic expectations in Judaism were diverse, the Messiah at least had to make things better for the Jewish people, which Jesus did not do.

2. His manner of life was one that, measured by most interpretations of Torah, could be called that of a sinner, and his manner of death was one that Torah declared cursed by God (Deut. 21:23).

C. Christians of the first generation experienced a state of cognitive dissonance that required resolution.

1. Their experience was that Jesus was powerfully alive as God's son and the source of the Holy Spirit that empowered them.

2. Their symbolic world, however, seemed to declare that Jesus could not be what their experience said.

3. Cognitive dissonance can be resolved in one of three ways: deny experience, deny the symbolic world, or reinterpret one in light of the other.

D. In all of the earliest Christian compositions, Torah is reinterpreted in light of the experience of Jesus the crucified and raised Messiah.

1. Already in the letters of Paul, James, and Peter and in Hebrews, we find the shift from "Christ or Torah," to "Torah as understood through Christ."

2. The Gospels show an even further stage in which the deeds and sayings and, above all, the death of Jesus are clothed in the garments of Torah, so that the narratives show this Messiah as "fulfilling" Scripture.

III. The disparate writings of the earliest Christians become the "New Testament" through an equally dialectical process of canonization.

A. The first stages are in the use, exchange, and collection of local writings in an organic process of fellowship, resulting in various "local collections" by the early 2nd century.

B. In the mid-2nd century, two tendencies forced a more formal selection of writings to be read in the liturgy together with Torah:

1. The tendency toward contraction is represented by Tatian (who wanted to reduce the number of the Gospels) and Marcion (who wanted to eliminate Torah and reduce the New Testament to Paul).

2. The tendency toward expansion is represented by Gnosticism, which produced an extensive collection of new "revelatory" compositions.

C. The canonical decisions of the late 2nd century, to include Torah and twenty-seven writings in "Old" and "New" Testaments is eventually ratified by official statements of the fourth cent.

IV. Biblical interpretation in the history of Christianity manifests a continuing and unresolved dialectic.

A. Theologically and liturgically, Scripture is treated as divinely inspired, harmonious, authoritative, and transforming.

B. Yet, the shape of the texts resists those same principles, showing human authorship, divergent perspectives, and all-too-human limitations.

1. The tension between Old and New Testaments reflects the church's ongoing struggle to define itself vis-a-vis Judaism.
2. The tension between Scripture and experience reflects Christianity's ongoing commitment to a living God rather than a dead letter.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 595–619.

Supplementary Reading:

H. Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Guides to Biblical Study; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

Questions to Consider:

1. Discuss how this proposition opens up the process behind the composition of the New Testament: "Without the Resurrection, there would be no Christianity; without the Crucifixion, there would be no New Testament."
2. How can the process of the canonization of Scripture legitimately be considered a process of Christian self-definition?

Lecture Twenty-Two
Teachers and Creeds

Scope: As religious communities expand in size and survive through time, they tend to develop more elaborate forms of institution and more structured patterns of belief. Earliest Christianity was characteristically simple with respect to structure and creed. Itinerant apostles and prophets exercised authority wherever they appeared, whereas in local churches, elders and supervisors carried out administration, as well as teaching. The Gnostic crisis of the 2nd century—together with the prophetic movement called Montanism—forced the issue of belief and structure. In response to the charismatic leaders of Gnosticism and Montanism, orthodox Christianity located authority in the teaching office of the bishop, regarded as the successor of the apostles. In response to Gnosticism, orthodox Christians developed the "rule of faith," which eventually became the creed.

Outline

I. Two lines of development in Christianity are connected to the experiential character of this religion.

- **A.** Institutional development is a natural consequence of communities' survival through time and expansion through space.
- **B.** Creedal development is not a necessary feature of religions and is almost lacking in some; the complexity of Christian belief is a consequence of its distinctive character and its internal conflicts over identity.
- **C.** Distinctive to Christianity is the way these lines of development intertwine as part of the same historical process.

II. In the earliest period, both creed and community structure were relatively simple, although both contained the germ of complexity.

- **A.** The experientially based confession "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3) inevitably would lead to cognitive complications:
  - **1.** How does calling Jesus "Lord" affect Jewish monotheism ("God is one")? Does it lead to polytheism (having "two powers in heaven")?

2. How does the experience of the Holy Spirit as "personal transforming power" further complicate the sense of the unity of God?
3. What are the implications of confessing Jesus as risen Lord for the perception of his human life?

B. The interaction of transient and local authority structures in the first generation also created tension.

1. Paul lists apostles and prophets (wandering preachers) as "first and second in the church," with teachers in third position (1 Cor. 12:28). As one "called by God," Paul claims authority over all his communities; so also do James and Peter.
2. At the same time, local churches had an authority structure resembling those of the Greco-Roman club and Hellenistic synagogue: a board of elders (with a supervisor = bishop) that handled administration, as well as teaching (see 1 Tim. 3:1–14).

III. Early 2nd-century writings provide glimpses of the tension embedded in the Christian confession and authority structure.

A. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, we see the continuing activity of a prophetic character, whereas in the *Didache*, we see the attempt to curtail prophetic authority in favor of local administration.

B. In *I Clement*, the authority of bishops is stressed to quell challenges to authority and in the *Letters* of Ignatius of Antioch, authority and correct belief are connected.

1. Ignatius opposes what he regards as "false teaching" concerning Jesus, possibly on two fronts: On one side were those who wanted to return to Judaism and, on the other, those who argued that Jesus was divine but not fully human.
2. The insistence of Ignatius on unity under a single bishop is clearly connected to the desire to protect the authentic experience of the community.

IV. The crisis of the mid-2nd century revealed the deep ambiguity at Christianity's experiential core.

A. The entire New Testament is committed to the possibility of God acting in a fundamentally new way in human experience through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. But are there limits to that capacity? How much can be new without changing identity?

B. The struggles over the canon of Scripture were also ideological struggles, in which Montanism and Gnosticism represented a radical claim to the experiential.

1. Montanus was a prophet who claimed the authority of the Holy Spirit in support of his charismatic movement.

2. His was the first of a succession of religious movements in which prophets claimed new divine revelations based on the teachings of Moses and Jesus (Mani—Manicheism, Muhammed—Islam), appearing to make Christianity a stepping stone and Jesus only one in a succession of prophets.

C. Gnostics made a more complex claim, involving new writings, new teachers, and new revelations about God through the risen Christ. Although different varieties of Gnosticism existed, the movement as a whole shared a common definition of Christianity, in experiential terms, as the enlightenment (transformation) of the individual through knowledge and salvation from the body (regarded as evil), demanding a withdrawal from social involvement.

D. The orthodox response (represented by Irenaeus of Lyons's *Against All Heresies*) established the strategy of Christian self-definition: the rule of faith (creed), canon of Scripture, and apostolic succession (the teaching authority of bishops).

Supplementary Reading:

J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, 1960).

G. Luedemann, *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity*, trans. J. Bowden (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996).

Questions to Consider:

1. In what sense can the Christian creed be considered a defense of the experience underlying this religious tradition?

2. How are convictions concerning the ultimacy (and finality) of revelation in Jesus expressed by the doctrinal conflicts of the mid-2nd century?

Lecture Twenty-Three
The Power of the Saints

Scope: Christianity has retained its original power and a radical—and sometimes subversive—edge in the saints, who have reminded Christianity of the priority of religious experience through the ages by rekindling in their lives the fervor of Christianity's beginnings. The term "saint" (= "holy one") was applied in the New Testament to all members of the community as a way of demarcating the boundary between the assembly of God and the world. With the passage of time, the term began to denote Christians of extraordinary charisma, virtue, wonderworking, or transformed life, who, in their respective circumstances, revealed the power of the Resurrection and the pattern of the humanity of Christ. One way of telling the story of Christianity is through the story of such charismatic figures, who have been the most convincing evidence of this religion's truth and the source of its renewal.

Outline

I. The development of the image of "the saint" in Christianity is testimony to the experiential heart and subversive possibility of this religion.

A. In Paul's letters, the term "the saints" (*hoi hagioi* = "the holy ones") does not single out exceptional people but is used for the members of the community as opposed to "the world" (= nonmembers of the community); see 1 Corinthians 1:1; 6:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1.

B. During the course of the first four centuries, the saint becomes one in whom the ideals of Christianity are experientially realized through the transformation of life in a visible and marked degree.

II. In the writings of the New Testament, we can see how "sanctification"—which is God's will for all believers (1 Thess. 4:3)—involves the transformation of life in an internal imitation of Jesus.

A. The Holy Spirit is the power of new life but also the guide to living it (see Rom. 8 and Gal. 5).

1. Those who have the Holy Spirit are to live according to the pattern they have in Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:1–11).
2. "Fulfilling the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) is a matter of living with radical faith in God (Rom. 14:23) and in self-emptying service to others, as Paul understands Jesus to have done (Rom. 15:1–7).

B. The First Letter of Peter and Hebrews show a similar understanding.
1. In 1 Peter 2:21–25, Christians are called to imitate the manner in which Jesus Christ underwent his suffering; Jesus is a moral example to be followed.
2. Hebrews 12:1–3 calls Jesus "the pioneer and perfecter of faith," and Christians are to "look to Jesus" as they undergo their own transformation in faith.

C. The Gospel narratives all present Jesus as a person of radical faith and self-disposing service who calls his followers to walk in the same manner he did.
1. The Gospels call Jesus's followers "students" (*mathetai*).
2. In the New Testament, Christianity is not only the gift of power, but a task assigned to use that power for the transformation of the self and the world.

III. During the period when Christianity was under state persecution, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, certain figures emerge as exemplifying the imitation of Jesus through a "testimony" that leads to martyrdom.

A. Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch (d. ca. 107) writes a series of letters as a prisoner on his way to execution at Rome. Especially in his *Letter to the Romans*, he reveals an intense martyr piety. He does not see his death as a tragedy but as the opportunity to become a "finished" disciple by moving toward life through the same kind of witness as that of Jesus, his Lord.

B. Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna (d. ca. 155) collected Ignatius's letters and himself wrote to the church at Philippi. Shortly after his execution, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* was written; in it, the bishop's death is in imitation of Jesus's death.

C. The *Passion of Perpetua* is the most famous of the *Acts of the Martyrs*; Perpetua was executed on 7 March 203 under the Emperor Severus. Her death is portrayed as a prophetic witness. The *Passion* is her journal; in it, she tells of visions in which she

becomes a man and does battle with "the evil one." She refuses all entreaties to give up her religion and worship the emperor, and she dies literally imitating the path of Jesus.

IV. After Constantine, when Christianity was the imperial religion, many Christians sought a more radical way of life in imitation of Christ and of the martyrs.

- **A.** The "Fathers and Mothers" of the Desert exemplify the radical commitment to poverty, celibacy, and total devotion to prayer.
- **B.** A variety of forms of monasticism developed as a structured way of life that imitated "the apostolic age."
- **C.** The charismatic impulses of the saints throughout the ages have often revivified Christianity even as they have challenged its established systems and structures of authority.
  1. The power of the Holy Spirit at work in such women and men has enabled them to continue the "charismatic" dimension of Christianity as a religion that is most alive when it is most experiential.
  2. On one side, saints are the pride of Christianity once they are dead; when alive, their prophetic protests have often been resisted.

Supplementary Reading:

P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

H. Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957).

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the "martyr piety" of the 2nd century express convictions both about the Resurrection and the imitation of Jesus's humanity?
2. Consider this proposition: "The most authentic history of Christianity is the history of the saints."

Lecture Twenty-Four
Christianities Popular and Real

Scope: A study of the vestibule and sanctuary of a typical Roman Catholic church of the 21st century reveals the enduring tension in Christianity between official religion (which is all about controlled power) and popular religion (in which power eludes official channels). Official religion always claims to be real religion, tending to despise the popular. Academic study of religion, for a variety of reasons, has tended to follow the same path. Thus, we know much more about Christianity's official leaders, doctrines, moral teachings, and forms of organization than we do about the actual religious lives of Christians. Only recently has scholarship paid due attention to popular forms of Christianity, although its messiness makes analysis difficult. We have learned just enough to open our eyes to see afresh the history of Christianity and its current manifestations.

Outline

I. A phenomenological analysis of a typical Roman Catholic church in the United States today reveals two very different faces of Christianity in the sanctuary and in the vestibule, suggesting a tension in this religion that has been present for many centuries.

- **A.** The sanctuary reveals an understanding of religion as power mediated through official rituals and forms; architecture likewise connects hierarchical conceptions of divine and ecclesiastical authority.
- **B.** The vestibule reveals an understanding of religion as access to power through a variety of charismatic and unofficial channels; the point is not legitimacy but efficacy.
- **C.** Much of Christian history can be told as the story of the struggle between the poles of the charismatic and the institutional, the popular and the legitimate.

II. Several factors have cooperated in asserting the dominance of "official" Christianity and the eclipsing of "popular" Christianity.

A. In the patristic and medieval period, Roman Catholic priests and bishops were often drawn from the cultured and educated ranks of society. They represented a certain elite outlook that was not held by the larger populace.

1. They were, therefore, already predisposed to Greek and Scholastic philosophy and used forms of Greek rationality to develop Christian doctrine in exquisite detail.

2. Thus, Christian discourse at that time took place at the level of the Church officials, and we have very little evidence of the religious practices of the simple (uneducated) folk.

3. In contrast, what we know about popular Christianity is found mainly in the writings of the official theologians (priests and bishops), who were very wary of those incursions from Greco-Roman religion into Christianity.

4. Saint Augustine of late 4th-century Carthage, for example, was deeply bothered by the popular practice of people banqueting at the tombs of the martyrs in clear connection with the ancient Greco-Roman custom of banqueting in honor of the dead.

5. From the very beginning, then, we see a preference for the rational, the textual, the ordered, and the rational, rather than the popular.

B. Nevertheless, throughout the medieval period, because of their power, we see more and more of the popular and charismatic forms of religious observance entering into Catholicism.

1. These forms were gradually given official recognition insofar as they could be connected to official doctrine, morality, and polity. Thus arose the sacramental system, the worship of saints and relics, pilgrimages, and so on.

2. By the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Roman Catholicism had a very strong infusion of popular Christianity in it, which is what the reformers objected to.

C. The Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment scorned religious dimensions that were considered "superstitious."

1. The Reformation based itself on Scripture and eliminated the sacramentalism of the Catholic tradition, as well as the abuses associated with popular piety (e.g., the traffic in relics).

2. Luther was correct in seeing Roman Catholicism of the 14th, 15th, and early 16th centuries as a great machine for salvation

that rewarded deeds without necessarily requiring a deeply held faith (e.g., traffic in indulgences).

3. The 18th-century Enlightenment movement (especially in Deism) measured the worth of Christianity on the basis of its exclusion of the supernatural (glossolalia, miracles, healings, visions, prayer, and so on) and its embrace of the reasonable (claims had to be empirically verifiable by the standards of the scientific method) and the morally intelligible and convincing (by the standards of the 18th-century educated classes).

D. The study of Christianity adopted the same perspectives on what was "true" religion.

1. Scholarship by its nature is attracted to the historical, the textual, the ideational, rather than the contemporary, nontextual, and embodied.
2. Histories of Christianity focused on the development of its ideas and institutions.
3. Theologies focused on ideas and their development through time.

E. Christianity as actually lived was either ignored or condemned.

III. The understanding of Christian origins and early development has been deeply affected by the same bias.

A. The "Protestant presuppositions" that identify real Christianity with clear doctrine and simple morals has led to the quest for an original Christianity that was uniquely pure, distinct both from Judaism and Hellenism precisely because it was not "religion" but "faith." The same urge drives the quest for a simple "historical Jesus," free from dogma and miracle.

B. In such a view, the religious dimensions of Christianity are attributed to an unfortunate "development" in the direction of Catholicism. True Christianity must always be rescued from religion.

IV. Learning to see popular religion as real religion changes the perception of Christianity entirely.

A. In academe today, we see a change in perspective through three influences.

B. The first of these influences is the contribution of women's history, which has drawn attention to the suppressed and marginal voices of the past.

C. Another influence is the development of social history, which has enabled us to appreciate history as a world shaped by constant social patterns and the interactions of daily life, as well as distinct events.

D. Finally, academe has been influenced by the development of religious phenomenology—looking at religion from the way life is organized around certain experiences and convictions concerning power.

V. From this perception, we can draw three conclusions.

A. We have seen that Christianity from the start is thoroughly "religious" in character, resembling in different ways both Judaism and Greco-Roman religion but focusing its "organized way of life" around the perception of the ultimate power found in the Resurrection of Jesus.

B. The development of Christianity, in this view, is not a fundamental betrayal of its original spirit so much as a transmutation of the forms within which the same spirit has managed to manifest itself.

C. The answer to the question with which this course began—"How can Christianity continue to survive and thrive when it has been attacked and discredited in its Scripture, its ideas, and its morality?"—now becomes apparent: Christianity's capacity to draw adherents remains the same as in the beginning, based in the convincing quality of its claim to transform lives through the experience of power.

Essential Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 1–37.

Supplementary Reading:

C. McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

R. Orsi, *Thank You, Saint Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of the Hopeless* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

Questions to Consider:

1. How do academic and ideological presuppositions affect what is even perceived in religious traditions?
2. If the proposition "true Christianity is popular Christianity" goes too far, in what respects should it be modified?

Timeline

B.C.E. (before the common era)

323	Death of Alexander the Great.
168	Roman domination of Mediterranean.
168	War of Maccabees against Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
167	Book of Daniel.
63	Conquest of Palestine by Pompey.
30	Augustus becomes emperor of Rome.
6	Judaea annexed as province by Rome.
4	Birth of Jesus (probable).

C.E. (common era)

28	Ministry of John the Baptist.
30	Crucifixion of Jesus (probable).
34/37	Conversion of Saul/Paul (probable).
49–64	Active ministry and letters of Paul; other epistolary literature.
64	Nero burns Rome, punishes Christians.
66	Start of Jewish War against Rome.
68	Death of Paul (and probably also of Peter).
70	Destruction of Jerusalem Temple by Romans; Gospel of Mark.
85	The Birkat Ha Minim; Gospels of Matthew and Luke.
90	Gospel of John.
95	First Letter of Clement.

107 ..... Death of Ignatius of Antioch.

122–135 ..... Final Jewish revolt against Rome.

135 ..... Destruction of Jerusalem by Romans.

135/6 ..... Valentinus in Rome.

155 ..... Martyrdom of Polycarp.

160 ..... Death of Marcion.

165 ..... Martyrdom of Justin.

156/170 ..... Ministry of Montanus (approximate).

200 ..... Death of Irenaeus.

203 ..... Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity.

313 ..... Edict of Milan (Constantine).

325 ..... Council of Nicaea.

Glossary

Acts of the Apostles (also **Acts**): The second volume of the Gospel of Luke, which, by providing a narrative account, is the most important source for Christianity's first expansion.

apocalyptic: A view of history as tending toward a (divinely appointed) goal, usually in two stages. A present age of oppression is to be followed by an age of triumph for the righteous. Also, the visionary literature containing such views.

apocryphal: Either Jewish or Christian literature that was not included in the canonical collections.

apostle: From the Greek word meaning "sent out with a commission," the term used in early Christianity for representatives of the risen Christ.

baptism: The Christian ritual of initiation, carried out in public (probably) by means of immersion in water.

canon: The official collection of literature regarded as authoritative (and often as divinely inspired) by religious tradition.

charismatic: From the Greek word for "gift," either an expression of the Holy Spirit's activity or a person whose authority is based in such activity.

Christ/Christianity: The Hebrew term Messiah is translated into Greek as Christos, which becomes the basis for the religion in which Jesus the Messiah is the central symbol.

circumcision: The Jewish ritual of initiation into the people of God through the removal of the foreskin of the penis. For adults, circumcision signifies acceptance of the obligation to observe Torah.

covenant: A binding treaty between two parties. In the biblical tradition, such a treaty sets out the relationship between the one God and the people of Israel.

diaspora: Any place Jews lived that was not Palestine. In the 1st century, more Jews lived in the Diaspora than in the land of Israel.

doctrine: That aspect of a religion that contains its authoritative teachings; some traditions, such as Christianity, are rich in doctrine, while others, such as Judaism, are less so.

ekklesia: The Greek word means "assembly" and is used both for the synagogue in the Diaspora and for the earliest Christian gatherings; usually translated as "church."

emic: A technical term in anthropology for participant perspective or witness. Paul's letters are an example of emic discourse. The opposite of etic.

Epicurean: One of the major schools of philosophy, founded in the 4th century B.C.E. by Epicurus and characterized by tight-knit communities.

eschatology: Any understanding of the "end" of history—the term derives from the Greek *eschatos*, which means "last" or "end."

Essenes: One of the "sects" in Judaism in Palestine in the 1st century. Members are most often identified with the community at Qumran but probably lived elsewhere as well.

etic: A technical term in anthropology for the perspective or discourse of a nonparticipant, especially with respect to the scientific analysis of social realities. The opposite of emic.

Eucharist (see also Mass and Lord's Supper): From the Greek word for "thanksgiving," the term used for the fellowship meals among early Christians celebrated in the name of Jesus.

gentile: The term can be used for "the nations" that are not Israel or individuals who are not Jews.

glossolalia: One of the spiritual gifts in early Christianity, consisting in an ordered form of babbling; also "speaking in tongues."

Gnosticism/Gnostic: Terms used to designate groups in the 2nd century who claimed the name of Christian and understood it in individualistic terms as a religion of enlightenment.

Greco-Roman: The name used to identify the cultural mix of the 1st-century Mediterranean world, which had a Greek civilization that had been taken over by Roman rule.

Hellenism: The cultural reality that resulted from Alexander the Great's attempt to universalize the classical Greek culture of Athens.

Lord's Supper: See Eucharist.

magic: From one perspective, the term used to deprecate a religion not one's own. From another perspective, a relationship to transcendent power that is fundamentally manipulative.

mantic prophecy: A much respected form of prophecy in Hellenism, because of the conviction that the god inhabited the speaker, as Apollos did the prophetesses at Delphi (mantic = mania).

mishnah: The authoritative collection of Jewish law derived from Torah by *midrash*, compiled by Judah the Prince ca. 200 C.E.

monotheism: The distinctive tradition of Judaism that God was a name attributable only to one being, the creator, sustainer, and judge of the world. In Greco-Roman culture, some thinkers were moving to some version of this.

Montanus/Montanism: From the middle of the 2nd century C.E., a prophet and his movement located in Phrygia.

morality: That element of a religion in which religious experience is given expression through patterns of behavior having to do with good and evil.

mystery: In this context, the name for religious cults that developed in Greece (as at Eleusis) and, in the Hellenistic era, proliferated in honor of different gods and goddesses.

mysticism: That element of a religion in which an adherent seeks not a mediated but an immediate experience of the divine, through prayer or some other practice.

pagans: Slighting term used for Gentiles and especially by Christians for Greco-Roman folk who remained unconverted to Christianity.

patristic: From the Greek "father," the term used for ecclesiastical literature after the time of the New Testament up to the medieval period.

Pentecostal: Christians who take their distinctive stand on the exercise of the spiritual gifts (thus, Pentecost), especially prophecy and glossolalia.

Pharisee/Pharisaism: One of the sects in Judaism in 1st-century Palestine, characterized by deep devotion to Torah and destined to become the main surviving rival to Christianity after the destruction of the Temple.

phenomenology/phenomenological: In the strict sense, a form of idealist philosophy associated with such thinkers as Merlau-Ponty and Husserl; in a

looser sense (used in this course), a way of looking at things (phenomena) to learn as much as possible about their nature without determining their causes.

polis: The Greek city-state, one of the instruments by which Alexander hoped to create a pan-Hellenic world.

polytheism: The religious system that finds the divine power or energy distributed among many gods, often envisaged in terms of an extended family (as the Olympians).

proselytes: Literally in Greek, "those who have come over"; used for converts to Judaism.

Pythagorean: One of the major schools of philosophy, stemming from the 6th-century B.C.E. sage Pythagoras. Members lived in communities and shared possessions.

rite de passage: Technical term for rituals of initiation, consisting of three stages: withdrawal, liminality, reconnection. Such rituals lead to status enhancement. A Christian example is baptism.

ritual: A pattern of repetitive behavior to which meaning is attached.

Sadducees: One of the 1st-century Palestinian Jewish sects, closely identified with the Temple and the high-priestly aristocracy.

Septuagint (also **LXX**): The translation of Torah into Greek carried out in Alexandria ca. 250 B.C.E.; the tradition was that seventy translators were involved, thus the name and abbreviation.

stoic/cynic: The combination of philosophical traditions found in such figures as Epictetus. Stoicism was the most popular philosophy of the Roman Empire, but it was strongly influenced by the individualism and asceticism of the Cynic movement.

symbolic world: Social structures and the symbols that express and support them; roughly equivalent to "culture."

syncretism: The merging of things, specifically the merging of polytheistic families.

Talmud: The final authoritative collection of rabbinic lore, found in a Palestinian and in a Babylonian version, both completed by the 6th century C.E.

Tanak: The Jewish name for scripture, an acronym constructed from the three constitutive parts: **T**orah (first five books), **N**ebiim (prophets), **K**etubim (writings).

transcendent/ence: Literally "a going beyond," the term used in religion for power or value that is not definable in empirical terms; thus, something that is "greater than" the beautiful, the useful, or even the good.

xenoglossa: Literally "strange tongue," the term used for speaking in languages that one has not learned.

zealots: The Jewish sect in 1st-century Palestine that most strongly identified with the symbol kingship and sought actively to overthrow Roman rule.

Bibliography

Essential Reading

The most frequently cited primary sources in this course are the writings of the New Testament. Any modern translation is acceptable. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is available in several formats, among them *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* edited by B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The NRSV has the advantage of using the best available manuscript evidence and of being gender-inclusive. I tend to prefer its predecessor, the Revised Standard Version, which is not gender-inclusive but is overall a more accurate translation.

A large number of other ancient primary texts are referred to or cited in the lectures. The following works contain most of them (as well as many others):

Barrett, C. K. *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire Illustrating Christian Origins*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1987. A collection of abbreviated entries whose main value is pertinence; Jewish texts are included as well.

Charlesworth, J. H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1992. This splendid collection contains introductions, translations, and helpful notes for all extant Jewish literature between the Maccabees and Mishnah, excepting the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Elliott, J. K. *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. A contemporary translation (with introductions and notes) of all pertinent apocryphal (non-canonical) Christian literature, except the Gnostic and patristic. Look here especially for the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.

Lewis, N., and Reinhold, M. *Roman Civilization: Selected Readings*. 2 vols., 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. A valuable reference for a wide array of primary sources, almost all of them abbreviated, dealing with everything from commercial law to religion.

The Loeb Classical Library. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927. This series of more than 500 titles contains original language and translated versions of most of the classical authors treated in this course. Look here under author for the writings of Epictetus, Lucian, Dio Chrysostom, and Cicero, as well as Philo and Josephus.

Roberts, A., and Donaldson, J. *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Peabody, MA: Henrickson Publishers, 1994 [1885]. This reprint of the standard set of early patristic writings in English translation remains the most accessible, even if in a somewhat archaic rendering. Look in the first two volumes for the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp, the Didache, Justin, and Irenaeus.

Robinson, J. M., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Translated and introduced by the members of the Coptic Gnostic Library of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity. 4th rev. ed. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996. This volume contains all the Gnostic materials discovered in Egypt in 1947.

Vermes, G. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 3rd ed. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1987. A responsible and readable version of the library discovered at Qumran in 1947 and so important for the understanding of Judaism in Palestine in the 1st century.

For further guidance to names and topics mentioned but insufficiently clarified in this course, recourse can be had to these standard reference works:

Encyclopedia of Religion. Edited by Mircea Eliade. New York: MacMillan, 1987.

The Oxford Classical Dictionary. 2nd ed. Edited by N. G. L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. 3rd ed. Edited by E. A. Livingstone. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Frequent reference is made to two books by the teacher of this course:

Johnson, L. T. *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. Five of the twenty-four lectures have a fuller exposition, as well as a substantial set of discussions by way of notes, in this book.

———. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. A textbook that covers the range of issues having to do with Christian origins.

Supplementary Reading

Apuleius. *The Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses*. Translated by Robert Graves. New York: Farrer, Strauss and Giroux, 1951.

Banks, R. *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. A nontechnical and accessible treatment of Paul as a builder of communities, with a great deal of useful information.

Barclay, J. M. G. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.)*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996. A well-informed and clearly written survey of Diaspora life, with attention given to different locations and a variety of cultural aspects.

Boring, M. E., Berger, K., Colpe, C., eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. A wide variety of materials from Greco-Roman religion are brought to bear on specific New Testament passages.

Bradshaw, P. F. *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. A good review of the available sources and of the methodological problems involved in deciphering them.

Brown, P. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. In contrast to the approach taken by the lecture, Brown focuses especially on the perception of power associated with the saints after their death.

Cartlidge, D., and Dungan, D. *Documents for the Study of the Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. A useful collection of texts in translation that illustrate certain Gospel stories. I draw the example of Chanina ben Dosa from this volume.

Cohen, S. J. D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987. A straightforward and informed survey of Jewish history in Palestine during the time when Christianity was born.

Cotter, W. *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. New York: Routledge, 1998. A useful collection of stories about wonder-working of various kinds. Of special interest are the ones concerning healing.

Cullmann, O. *Early Christian Worship*. Trans. A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978. A good survey of the rituals present in the first generation of the Christian movement, with special attention to the Lord's Supper.

———. *Prayer in the New Testament*. Trans. J. Bowden. Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. The author traces the

various forms of prayer found in the writings of the New Testament, including those of Jesus, the Gospels, and the letters.

Davies, W. D., and Finkelstein, L. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 1: *The Persian Period*; Vol. 2: *The Hellenistic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984 and 1989. The volumes in this normally authoritative series consist of essays by experts in the various subjects treated. The first volume is superior to the second, which is spotty in several places.

Feeney, D. *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. A fine treatment of the religious dimensions of Roman life with an appreciation for the interplay between cultural context and religious behavior and profession.

Fredriksen, P. *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*. New York: Knopf [Random House], 1999. Among the spate of historical Jesus books, this is a well-argued account that emphasizes Jesus's roots within the worship life of his people.

Galinsky, K. *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996. With a sharp focus on the early Roman Empire, this treatment places religious phenomena in a rich cultural matrix.

Gamble, H. Y. *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning*. Guides to Biblical Study; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. A straightforward account of the process of canonization with a judicious use of primary source material.

Goodenough, E. R. *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935. A provocative analysis of Hellenistic Jewish texts that perhaps goes overboard in its thesis but opens up much that otherwise would not be seen.

———. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman World*. 13 vols. New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–1968. A groundbreaking collection of archaeological materials in support of Goodenough's overall thesis concerning the mystical character of Hellenistic Judaism.

Goodspeed, E. J. *A History of Early Christian Literature*. Revised and enlarged by R. M. Grant. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. A useful review of extant Christian writings, providing dates, circumstances, and contents.

Jungmann, J. A. *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1959. An authoritative collection of essays on various aspects of the development of the Christian liturgy, with particular attention to the Eucharist.

Kee, H. C. *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic in New Testament Times*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. This short study places the miracle stories of the Gospel in the context of contemporary practices and discussions concerning sickness and its healing in the Mediterranean world.

Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. 2nd ed. London: Longmans, 1960. This is a standard and highly respected treatment of the development of creedal language in Christianity, beginning from the New Testament and extending through the elaborate conciliar creeds of the 4th and 5th centuries.

Kelsey, M. T. *Speaking with Tongues: An Experiment in Religious Experience*. London: Epworth, 1964. A study that is noteworthy for its attention to contemporary examples of glossolalia by a participant-observer.

———. *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974. A psychological-spiritual appreciation of the function of dreams in revelation, with attention to cross-cultural manifestations, as well as biblical examples.

Livingston, J. C. *Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001. An accessible and readable introductory college text that provides in its opening chapter a set of definitions of religion and a description of methods that distinguish religious studies as a discrete field.

Lorenzen, T. *The Resurrection and Discipleship: Interpretive Models, Biblical Reflections, Theological Consequences*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995. A useful survey of the dominant modes of interpreting the Resurrection of Jesus in Christianity, and the implications for different views of Christian life.

Luck, G. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. A fine collection of hard-to-find primary texts dealing with everything from dream interpretation to spells, in English translation and with introductions.

Luedemann, G. *Heretics: The Other Side of Early Christianity*. Trans. J. Bowden. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996. A more than usually sympathetic portrayal of heterodoxy as the story of "history's

losers"; valuable mainly for the information provided on a wide range of teachers.

McDannell, C. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. A wonderful display of all the expressions of popular religiosity that ordinarily escape the scan of scholars.

Meeks, W. A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. The classic study in the social world of early Christianity, with particular attention to the community ethos and practices of Pauline churches.

Meier, J. P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1991 and 1994. Still uncompleted, this promises to be the largest of all "historical Jesus" projects; the first volume is particularly helpful for its discussion of method.

Meyer, M. W. *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987. As full a display as possible of the slender evidence concerning the mysteries, in English translation, with helpful introductions and notes.

Nicklesburg, G. W. *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. A standard and helpful review of the extant writings, providing dates, circumstances, and a sense of the contents and perspectives.

Nock, A. D. *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 [1933]. One of the truly great classic studies of ancient religion, tracing the experience of conversion; the chapter on the conversion of Lucius to Isis is especially enlightening

Ogilvie, R. M. *The Romans and Their Gods in the Age of Augustus*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1969. An accessible study that throws light especially on the religious perceptions and practices of the ordinary people.

Orsi, R. *Thank You Saint Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. A study of contemporary religious practice, centered in prayer and healing, that connects both to early Christianity and to cross-cultural phenomena.

Pilch, J. *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. A study

primarily of the Gospel healing accounts that makes use of cross-cultural anthropological analysis.

Sanders, E. P. *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* Philadelphia: Trinity International Press, 1992. A survey of 1st-century Judaism in Palestine that is especially good at showing common elements, as well as the differences among the various sects.

Sandmel, S. *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. A clear and useful guide to the life and writings of the main representative of Hellenistic Judaism that stresses his continuity with other forms of Judaism rather than his idiosyncratic character.

Smart, N. *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984. Among many introductions to religions of the world, this one stresses religious experience in a way congenial to this course.

Smith, J. Z. *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. A formidable example of a reductionistic approach to early Christianity, representing a posture exactly the opposite of the one taken in this course.

Tarn, W. W. *Hellenistic Civilization*. 2nd rev. ed., with G. T. Griffith. New York: World Books, 1952. A compact analysis of the goals of Alexander and the complex ways in which they were realized in the new synthesis called Hellenism.

Tcherikover, V. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*. Trans. S. Appelbaum. New York: Athenaeum, 1970. An early but still classic study of Diaspora Judaism in the Greek context, with particular attention to the tensions experienced by Jews in that setting.

Turcan, R. *The Cults of the Roman Empire*. Trans. A. Nevill. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996. A good companion to Meyer's sourcebook, providing substantial discussions on the major cults in the Roman period.

Twiss, S. B., and Conser, W. H., eds. *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion*. Hanover, NH: Brown University Press, 1992. A wide-ranging collection of essays showing different approaches to the subject of religious experience. The introduction by the editors is very helpful.

Van der Leeuw, G. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. Trans. J. E. Turner. 2 vols. New York: Harper and Row, 1963. The preeminent example

of a phenomenology of religion that places its focus on power as the key element in religious behavior.

Wach, J. *The Comparative Study of Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958. A much neglected masterpiece of analysis by a great sociologist of religion, this book provides much of the theoretical framework for the approach in this course.

Waddell, H. *The Desert Fathers*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1957. A collection of primary source material in English translation pertinent to the study of the early monks, especially in Egypt.

Weaver, M. J. *Introduction to Christianity*. 3rd ed., with D. Bakke and J. Bivins. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 1998. A highly successful college text that manages to be at once comprehensive and intelligible, while drawing readers through 2,000 years of Christian history. Contains many useful appendices.